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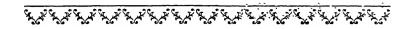
THE PARSON TAKES A WIFE



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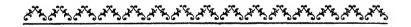
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The Parson Takes a Wife

by MARIA WILLIAMS SHEERIN



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY, NEW YORK

1948

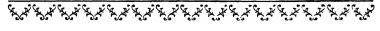
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For Charles Sheerin, Ir., and for the girl, whoever she may be, who will some day be his wife. Many of the people in this book are not portraits or profiles, but are just types with whom any clergyman might have to deal. And because I do not like to call even types Mr. X or Jane B I have christened them.

THE PARSON TAKES A WIFE



RICHMOND

1

T ALL STARTED at a Sunday School picnic which I did not attend.

There is an historic custom in Richmond that on the second Saturday in June all Episcopal Sunday School children shall be given a day at the seashore. A train of twenty day-coaches is chartered to leave the grotesque railroad station, known as the Main Street Depot, at eight o'clock in the morning. There is a witches' cauldron in railroad stations where banana peels, creosote, smoke, peanuts, and hot, oily metal are stirred, and the fumes reach out to envelop all travelers, especially excursionists. On the second Saturday in June at the Main Street Depot in Richmond, Virginia, the cauldron does not simmer; it comes to what your cook book calls a racing, foaming boil.

Long before eight the waiting room seethes with children, parents, Sunday School teachers and clergymen. In a fever of excitement they clutch their fishing rods and bathing suits and shoe boxes of lunch. The parents and teachers are tense with the necessity for bringing the children safely through the hazards of a Sunday School picnic, while the clergy wonder nervously what would be the future of the Episcopal Church in Richmond if the train were wrecked. To the children this is the exciting climax of a long winter of anticipation. For many of them it is the only time they ever ride on a train; to all of them it has the charm of being associated with the

heathen, because they do not know whether the money they put into their mite boxes goes to convert the Chinese, or to pay for the picnic train.

The destination of these nervous people is Buckroe Beach, a place only visited out of season by the Children of Light. It was chosen years ago by the Episcopal Sunday Schools because it is a good beach, unusually safe for the Virginia coast, and it is the nearest beach to Richmond, being only two and a half hours away by train. There is a Class A amusement park, which means that everything except the merry-go-round and the Ferris wheel are either dangerous or dark, and the roller coaster has been condemned. The board walk is lined with shooting galleries and booths where you can try to cover the red spot and win a kewpie doll or a Navajo blanket, or where you can get your fortune told. Interspersed with the booths and barkers, are shingle rooming houses, and long rows of bath houses which have things written on the inside walls which Episcopal Sunday School children are not supposed to understand.

Mothers and fathers take turns going on the picnic. When it is a father's turn to go, soon after arrival he hires a boat and he and his charges go off for a day of fishing. That is why the train starts for home at five o'clock instead of four: it waits for the fishing boats. The difference of the hour is the difference between fatigue and utter exhaustion. It is also why the trip home smells of fish, and the aisles of the coaches are slippery. When mothers go, they sit on the hot sand and grow old.

This year it was my mother's turn to take the two youngest of her little blond boys. She hoped the trip with its many irritations would take her mind off of me. On the long ride home, with a little boy asleep against each shoulder, and buckets of sand and seashells at her feet, she found herself seated opposite the Reverend R. Cary Montague. Cinders poured through the open windows and plastered themselves on hot,

damp skin. Children playing tag in the aisles, lurching with the rough, old coaches, screamed with pleasure one minute and pain the next. In her conversation with Mr. Montague, my mother raised her voice above the racket of the train and the children. It is impossible to carry on a desultory conversation with a deaf man in a noisy train, and it would not be worth the effort. Soon Mother was pouring all her troubles into his good ear. He listened with the concentration of the deaf while she told him of the difficulties of having a daughter at home. The expensive process of female education had produced one more restless girl who was trained to do nothing, either intellectual or domestic.

"It's Maria, Cary, I am so worried about her," she said to him. "She wants to take a job! Somehow I cannot make up my mind to let my daughter work in some strange man's office downtown. Of course she has no training, and I must say she isn't ambitious." The story was long, and Mother considered it sordid. For a year I had been "out," and it was a full-time occupation. I had more than my share of parties, because I had more uncles and aunts than most girls. I had flowers and dates and long feather fans, and I bought a new evening dress every time I saw one which I liked displayed in a shop window. Now with what I considered rare perception, but Mother thought was lack of refinement, I had decided that I had better find something else to do.

I had started with the genteel idea of a tea room in a quaint little yellow house under a tulip poplar on land which belonged to Uncle Johnny. I was sure Uncle Johnny would let me have the house, and I brought up the subject at the dinner table and waited for an enthusiastic round of applause. I did not get it.

"That's funny. I never heard of your even making fudge," was the first comment, but I considered it irrelevant.

"And I never saw you in the kitchen except to say hello

or good-by to Julia when you are taking a trip. Haven't you got yourself mixed up with Alice Foote Macdougall? Running a tea room isn't all candlelight and atmosphere and satisfied customers that you can order from a grocery store."

"Do you think you can rival the Country Club of Virginia?

It is less than a mile away."

These were minor objections, but I was shaken when I was told that the quaint little house was dependent for its water supply on a quaint little pump in the backyard, and that the kitchen floor was sagging dangerously. Perhaps I gave up too easily when I decided not to run a tea room, but I was persistent about the job.

Working at a cigar stand in one of the downtown office buildings might have more opportunity than running a tea room, and the day before the picnic I applied to Tony, the Greek, who ran the concession in the *Times-Dispatch* build-

ing.

For my interview with Tony, I dressed carefully and I put on long green earrings and a big black hat with green ostrich plumes. This was 1922, and my costume was not as strange as it sounds now. I asked Tony if he needed a girl to help him sell.

"You know a girl?" asked Tony.

"I want a job," I answered.

"Ever sell?" he asked.

"I have had experience selling cigars and cigarettes." Because I have nice legs I had been a cigarette girl at a charity ball. But Tony did not ask for references.

"Don't you need help at rush hour? Lunch time must be very busy."

"Sure, and I got Myrtle. But I tell you what," and he leaned across the counter, "write down your name and address and telephone number, and if Myrtle quits, I'll get in touch with you."

I went home disappointed but not discouraged. It had precipitated a family crisis, and Mother went on the Sunday School picnic and told Mr. Montague.

"She says that as the oldest of eight children, she should work and help her father. He takes her side and says it is a splendid idea."

"She can drive a car, can't she?" Mr. Montague asked.

"Yes, but I am afraid that is all she can do. We gave her a car for a graduation present."

"She is just what I want! Just exactly what I have been looking for. Of course this restricted vision I have means that I can't see on either side. I am like a horse in blinders, and I can't see a wink at night. Being somewhat deaf is a handicap, too, and I can't drive. I badly need a sort of secretary-chauffeur."

In her eagerness, Mother leaned forward and the little boys slid off her shoulders, and their heads came together behind her back with an awful crack. I know because Mr. Montague told me. She straightened them up, and said, "Do you really think you can use her?"

"Of course I can. You just send her around to me. I'll put her to work. It would be nice if she learned to typewrite. You tell her to do that and then send her to my office. I have a large correspondence as Executive Secretary of Social Service for the Diocese. As City Missionary I have to go all over town preaching and visiting in the institutions, and as associate editor I have writing to do for The Southern Churchman. She needn't learn shorthand. I'll just dictate to the typewriter, and then when I go to jail and the City Home and the penitentiary, she can drive me and sort of help me through the dark halls."

By the time the train pulled into the station, they had taken things out of my hands, and cheerfully given me to the church.

I was on the platform to meet Mother and the children and to drive them home. The picnickers poured off the train and through the gates. They did not look like the same Episcopalians we had put on the train in the morning. There was something abandoned about them now, and disreputable.

Mother got off the train holding tight to Mr. Montague. It had become important to her that in his blindness he should not fall off the station platform. She had forgotten the sleepy little boys who stumbled along behind, spilling sand from their gaily colored buckets.

From that moment on I never had a chance to regret the career I might have had at Tony's cigar stand. Instead I discovered the clergy.

Mr. Montague represented all the official social work which was done by the Episcopal Church in Richmond and in the Diocese of Virginia. He had arrived at this position over what, to a lesser man, would have been insuperable obstacles. Not the least of these was the fact that he had been born on the wrong side of the Potomac River. He was Bostonian in every branch of his ancestry, and this was Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy. From Boston he had brought with him, among other eccentricities, an interesting view of the Negro. To him the Negro was a person capable of rising to great heights, or falling to depths, and to be treated accordingly, he was not merely an ex-slave and potential house servant. Mr. Montague had no objection to shaking hands with a Negro, and calling him Mister or Missis or Miss.

Because of his partial blindness and deafness, his education had been informal and unorthodox. He had read law and been admitted to the West Virginia Bar, and later he had read theology and been ordained an Episcopal clergyman, and as such he had dedicated himself to the Social Gospel. He had no degrees in social work, and he was guided entirely by intuition and instinct, and by his intelligence and humor. Interestingly enough, he had the admiration of the most hardened sociologists in town.

Mr. Montague refused to take his blindness seriously, but it made him socially cautious. He bowed low and apologised to any unexpected object which he bumped into or trod on. It might be a lady, but some of his best bows were made to a chair or to a hatrack or to a door mat. He always wore a clerical collar except when he went to meetings of the Kiwanis Club. "It is a good idea," he explained. "I bump into so many things, people might think I am one of my own drunks."

He had the protection of many strange, unexpected people. One day I was riding in a taxi, a thing real Richmonders seldom do. The driver was dashing and cavalier, and I was swaying on the edge of the back seat, holding on to the strap and feeling a little self-conscious, when I saw ahead of us, starting across the street, a large, blundering, familiar figure.

"Look out!" I said excitedly to the driver. "Don't run over that man!"

"No, lady, that's Mr. Montague. We all look out for him." Every day was an adventure to Mr. Montague. After all, just getting across the street had an element of uncertainty. All day long he dealt with people, strange people, the derelicts of humanity; he loved them and they fascinated him. They on their part responded to his strength and humanity, in which there was no piety or self-righteousness. In his case work he had many successes and some failures. The failures he solved whenever he could by the simple expedient of sending them to Baltimore. Tom, for instance, was an electrician who was susceptible to several minor social temptations. He had a carefree charm, and Mr. Montague wasted

much time persuading police court judges to let him out of jail and give him another chance, only to find him in jail again the next time we visited there.

"The Judge won't give Tom to me again after this," he finally had to admit, and he telephoned to the City Jail. "Have Tom washed and ready and on the front porch. I'll be down for him in ten minutes." Then he said to me, "Come on, Miss Maria, we are putting Tom on the train for Baltimore. They are so proud of their social work up there, we will see what they do with Tom."

Tom did not like Baltimore, and was soon cozily ensconced once more in the Richmond City Jail.

On Wednesdays at twelve o'clock we went to jail. We were escorted by a trusty with a big bunch of keys down to a basement cell, which was an auditorium of sorts. The trusty let us in and turned the key behind us and we faced the audience which was already lined up on benches there. The men listened solemnly to Mr. Montague, and the organ was played by a musical plumber who served regular sentences for drunkenness. The song the men liked best to sing was a strange collision of ideas such as exists too often in Protestant hymn books:

Life is like a mountain railway with an engineer that's brave, We must make the run successful from the cradle to the grave. Watch the curves, the fills, the tunnels, never falter, never fail, Keep your hand upon the throttle and your eye upon the rail.

You will roll up grades of trial, you will cross the bridge of strife; See that Christ is your Conductor on this lightning train of life. Put your trust alone in Jesus, never falter, never fail, Keep your hand upon the throttle and your eye upon the rail.

You will often find obstructions. Look for storms of wind and rain. On a curve or fill or trestle, they will almost ditch your train. Put your trust alone in Jesus, never falter, never fail, Keep your hand upon the throttle and your eye upon the rail.

As you roll across a trestle spanning Jordan's swelling tide, You behold the Union Depot into which your train will glide. There you'll meet the Superintendent, God the Father, God the Son,

With the hearty, joyous plaudit, Weary Pilgrim, Welcome home.

In that dismal jail cell, Mr. Montague often sounded inspired, and Jesus of Nazareth seemed very near. After the service we handed out raisin buns which Mr. Montague got stale and therefore free from a friendly bake shop.

Mr. Montague had the combination of naïveté and sophistication which was the result of growing up in his strongly intellectual family, and being isolated from the companionship of any contemporary except his sister, who shared his intelligence and humor and also his handicaps of sight and hearing.

With a disarming charm, he put on a red necktie on Tuesdays and went out to mingle with the Kiwanians and sing "Smile a While" at lunch time. His shock of red hair clashed strikingly with his tie, and he felt that no one could tell him from the rest of the Kiwanians.

It was at a meeting of the Kiwanis Club that he met Captain Corbina Ford. We heard Mr. Montague come stumbling up the stairs, and he burst into the office with a flourish, leading a vision of blonde and voluptuous beauty dressed in a costume somewhat on the order of the Salvation Army, but wearing it with a difference. Her red-lined cape was turned back, and there was no bonnet covering her dazzling hair.

He introduced her proudly to the office staff, and we caught our breath and responded politely. While the young evangelist charmed the office, Mr. Montague explained to me in a stage whisper:

"The Kiwanians were wild about her. She is the most popular program we have had since I have been a member. Of course I did not hear what she said, but I could see her when I looked straight. She is on tour and draws a crowd street-preaching wherever she goes. I know she will cheer up the patients at Pine Camp. We will take her there with us this afternoon, and then we will put her on the train."

In 1923 Personality was the word. It was the key to the kingdom, and volumes were being written on how to acquire it. Personality was what this girl had. She had read no volumes to learn how to develop it; she just naturally had it, and the chief ingredient of her personality was sex. Aimee Semple McPherson might have been as magnetic, but I do not believe that Aimee was ever as beautiful as our Evangelist.

Pine Camp was the tuberculosis sanatorium, and Mr. Montague preached standing on the steps outside of the long screened porch where the patients lay in their beds. On this March afternoon he introduced his glamorous speaker and turned his informal pulpit over to her.

The sunlight flickered down on her through the trees, and then turned pale beside her golden beauty. A March breeze lifted her cape and turned it back from her shoulders like red wings. Her voice was husky and compelling as she told the patients of her early life and how she had found God. She told them dramatically of the squalor of her early years and of the death of her mother, who, because they "had no money for an undertaker, had to be buried before she was cold." She told many other things that Episcopalians do not mention. Mr. Montague was listening intently, leaning against the railing in front of her, with a hand cupped behind each ear. I think he heard her, because he had a funny look on his face. When it was over, we drove her to the "depot" and put her on the train with some relief.

I followed the career of this spectacular revivalist as it appeared thereafter in the newspapers. She was too beautiful

and she had too much personality to sustain a straight role as evangelist. She lacked Aimee McPherson's tenacity of profession, and it was not long before men and liquor took the place of God in her life. When she became involved in a drunken brawl and was injured in a fall, the fall was permanent.

On Mondays we visited the City Home, where Mr. Montague spent most of his time with the very old women, for whom he had a special sympathy. He treated them with deference, and he went from one to the other of them, having a little chat with each one, and bringing a gleam of light to their dead old eyes. Their ward was clean and bright, but the women sat with folded hands; life had stopped for them, but they could still complain. Tobacco juice drooled from the corners of their mouths, and each woman had by her side an unpleasant tin can into which she spit. I wondered at the cheerful philosophy of the few of them, more than at the whining unhappiness of the many. On one bright Monday in February, when the sun on the snow made fields of diamonds, I was more than ever aware of the contrast between the glistening world outside, and these forlorn derelicts. Impulsively I took off the corsage of violets which I was wearing and, pulling it to pieces, I gave each of the women a little bunch. As I went out of the ward, I looked back and met their bewildered eyes.

"They smell sweet," I said apologetically and falteringly. "I thought you might like to smell them." I left feeling futile and I realised that my stupid gesture had only drawn another, irritating contrast.

As I followed Mr. Montague from the City Home to the hospitals, to the jail and the penitentiary and to the various church homes, I lost any feeling I might have had of the church as a pedestrian routine, or as abracadabra, or as bread pills on the medicine shelf "To be taken on Sundays

for the soul." Instead I became aware of a pervading spirit which could touch the dullest situations and turn them from dark to light.

Mr. Montague's work as associate editor of *The Southern Churchman* involved him in the controversy which was shaking large southern sections of the church in those years. It was concerned with the literal interpretation of the Bible as opposed to what was unfortunately called "Higher Criticism." Virginia as the home of evangelical churchmanship in the Episcopal Church had been slow to accept the modern findings of biblical scholars. The Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria had for a long time accepted the new learning, but they were too cautious or too diplomatic to take sides. As the younger men emerged and began preaching, it gradually dawned upon the people that heresy was afoot.

The Reverend Doctor W. Russell Bowie with a genius for expression was interpreting this historical and scientific approach to the Bible from the pulpit of St. Paul's Church, and most of his congregation was making a painless transition. He was the editor of *The Southern Churchman*, and the editorial pages carried radical ideas into the most conservative homes.

An uncle of mine whom I shall call, for purposes of confusion, "Uncle Tom," was not a member of Dr. Bowie's congregation, but of the conservative rival parish, and he was a stockholder in *The Southern Churchman*. In the family he was regarded as an amusing character until he turned his disapproval on you, and then he was not funny at all, he was especially irritating because he thought he had an inside track with God. God, as Uncle Tom saw him, was a Master Puppeteer, and he wanted to help God handle the strings. The Bible was the official rule book, and it had been dictated by God to an excellent stenographer, and every verse was

of equal importance. It was not enough to say that the Bible contained the Word of God, the Bible was the Word of God. Uncle Tom in his relationship with God, did not see any sense in still small voices. Apparently God spoke to Uncle Tom in thunder and lightning, and when it was Uncle Tom's turn, he bellowed. I do not know whether anyone ever really knew what Uncle Tom was like, he was so noisy he never gave anyone a chance to find out. Of course being one of six loudly articulate brothers probably had something to do with his violent tactics.

The theology of Virginians for years had been influenced by the Evangelical movement which had reformed the Church of England in the last half of the eighteenth century. These Evangelical reformers had come to their conviction of sin and helplessness, and of redemption and salvation from the study of Scriptures, and from that grew the emphasis on the Bible as the sole foundation and rule of faith. This thinking had naturally been funnelled to Virginia, and that is where Virginia theology was when the new learning began to seep in. Higher and internal criticism was based on the new discovery of old documents, and on the need for the coördination of science and the Bible as two expressions of God. "Higher criticism" was a tragically unfortunate term. Imagine criticising the Word of God! It was going to be done over Uncle Tom's dead body, and he was not alone; he was one of an earnest and vigorous band defending the faith. They probably thought nostalgically of the dear days of the Council of Constance when the heretics, John Hus and Jerome of Prague were burned at the stake as part of the program. The stake was no longer recommended for heretics, because a heretic burning at the stake invariably had the last word. But heretics could be tried and deposed.

Uncle Tom always carried his fight into the camp of the leader of the opposition. He took his political views straight

to the President, and his pockets were always crammed with copies of letters and telegrams to the White House. Dr. Bowie was out in front in the fight for the historical approach to the Bible, and Dr. Bowie became Uncle Tom's chief target. He clamored to have Dr. Bowie tried as a heretic, and he demanded in public and private that Dr. Bowie leave the Episcopal Church. But Dr. Bowie's ground was too firm, and the historical approach was here to stay.

Then Uncle Tom became almost subtle. At least he could oust Dr. Bowie from his editorship of *The Southern Churchman*. As quietly as he could, Uncle Tom went about buying up stock in *The Southern Churchman*, but he was not quiet enough, and soon, to everyone's astonishment, *Southern Churchman* stock was selling at par. Uncle Johnny was a member of St. Paul's Church, and he bought some and gave it to me, and I put it away with my Confederate money and the Nicaraguan Canal bonds which Grandfather had given me as a baptismal present.

The group which soon acquired the nickname of Modernists, had another watchword, and this was "Evolution." In the land of ancestor worship, that too was a fighting word. Mr. Montague had a good time with that one. Being a proper Bostonian, he liked the idea of monkeys on Virginia family trees. Between letters to the editors and its editorial column, *The Southern Churchman* became lively reading.

The period culminated in the trial of John Scopes. Scopes, as the reader will remember, was a teacher in the public schools of Dayton, Tennessee, and he was found to be teaching evolution. William Jennings Bryan caused him to be brought to trial for heresy, with himself as prosecuting attorney, and Clarence Darrow became the lawyer for the defendant. There was no other war on, and the newspapers made the most of Monkeys vs. Adam and Eve. William Jen-

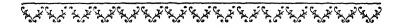
nings Bryan died of a stroke at the end of the trial, and with their chief crusader gone, the anti-evolutionists retired from the field and the religious front was quiet for a while.

In the meantime, with my own family divided and Mr. Montague carrying a torch for the Liberals, it was a tense period and pleasantly exciting to be involved in. Because of his theological stand and because of his gallant spirit, Mr. Montague was something of a hero to the young clergymen. They came to visit him, to laugh with him and to be inspired by him, and it was part of my job to entertain them.

One of these young men was a beguiling Irishman with a ready wit and a gift of gab. He also had a way with the piano, which did not impress me because I am tone deaf and pleased with the distinction it gives me, as I am pleased with

the name of Maria.

Thus one parson in my life led to another.



2

Tes, rr's true," my mother was saying to someone on the telephone. "She will bring him to see you on his next trip to Richmond. . . . I think it will be this week end. . . . That's sweet of you and I'll tell her. She will let you know. . . . We rather like his being a clergyman. . . . No, I haven't asked him yet what he thinks of the Virgin Birth. . . ."

The conversation ended and she came to my room and sat wearily down on the bed.

"You will just have to make time to take him around to see all of them," she said, and by "them" I knew she meant her six sisters-in-law. She had that strained look that she always wore when her sisters-in-law were taking too great an interest.

"Nan thinks it's too bad he is a Northerner, and Edith hopes he has an income, and Agatha says the young men at the Virginia Seminary are unorthodox these days, and she has invited you to dinner on Sunday so that Tom can ask him the catechism.

"Yes, of course it will have to be done, I mean he will have to meet them eventually. But I don't believe he is used to large families who take such an interest in each other. I suppose having dinner with Uncle Tom and Aunt Agatha is as good an initiation as any other.

"Write him and tell him to come this Saturday. They can't

understand your marrying a minister, and I can't go on explaining him any longer. Of course when they know him . . ." her voice trailed off optimistically, and I picked up my pen to prepare him for the week end.

Then I put down the pen and looked at the familiar view from my window. The kitchen garden sloped up to the row of Lombardy poplars on the hill. Nelson, the colored man who had always been there, was puttering around the garden. Under the apple tree was the white horse and the wagon which had brought my trunk from the station every time I had come home from boarding school and from summer trips. What would it be like to leave this home, the only one I had ever known, and go out to live in houses which are called Rectories?

On the following Sunday we went home from church with Uncle Tom. All through dinner we discussed the church service. I knew from experience that the clergyman is carved up with the roast on Sunday and the clergyman's wife is apt to be bitten into with dessert. Various reasons have been given by my pagan friends for going to church, and the list has included "it makes the before-dinner highball taste better," and "it gives a family something to talk about at the Sunday dinner table."

After dinner we sat on the terrace and drank our coffee. The James River, shining and copper colored, flowed by at the foot of the hill, and the Virginia sunshine warmed us through the feathery mimosa trees. Uncle Tom would not be beguiled by the Sunday quiet. He had a purpose. Abruptly he opened the subject for which we had been brought.

"Young man, I hope you are orthodox in your views of the Bible."

"I believe I am, sir. They are pretty much the views of my father who has been a clergyman for many years," Sherry answered. "Well, I don't know about that. I just know that nobody is going to thank you for taking their Bible away from them. This so-called 'Higher Criticism' is an invention of the devil." He launched on his favorite subject.

"He wishes he were a preacher," said Aunt Agatha in an aside to me.

"Evolution indeed!" Uncle Tom paid no attention to her. He got up from his chair and walked up and down. "Don't you bring any monkey ancestors down South with you!" Sherry listened quietly with the respect due a future unclein-law. Uncle Tom made an impassioned speech, and then as suddenly sat down again.

"I suppose if your father is a clergyman, that you are going into this thing with your eyes open. You know that as time goes on you will be less and less able to conceal your profession. To a perceptive person no one can conceal his profession, but for some reason, the clergyman least of all—"

"Tom was recognised as a lawyer just yesterday by a stranger at the club," Aunt Agatha interrupted him to say. Uncle Tom glared at her and went on.

"You will walk into a smoking car on the train thinking yourself disguised because you probably won't be wearing a clerical collar, and the travelling salesman will stop in the middle of his story. Someone else will say damn and then become self-conscious and apologize to you. As for you, young woman," it was my turn now, "you will look like a parson's wife——"

"It's their hats," Aunt Agatha whispered to me. "If you will just be careful of your hats——"

"You might become the mousy type," Uncle Tom continued, "and take on a protective coloring, or you might be the aggressive type and help your husband by running the parish. In that case he will take on a protective coloring."

"He is thinking of Mrs. Franklin," said Aunt Agatha into my ear. "She called him up the other day and asked him to have Dr. Franklin's salary raised. He ordered a crate of oranges for them instead."

"Isn't there anything in between?" I asked him.

"Oh, yes, it's a role for your own interpreting. The important thing is this, and it is a warning to you before it is too late: you won't be able to detach yourself from your husband's profession. You may think you can lead your own life and not worry about parishioners, but you can't. Don't ask me why."

We did not ask him. He went right on, instructing and predicting. He had evidently given the ministry much thought. When we left I needed cheering up.

"I don't want to be different," I said rebelliously. "And I don't want you to be different. I don't want to run the parish, and I don't want to be a mouse. Is it really as bad as that?"

"I don't think it is, and I have been in the ministry all my life. My mother has been reasonably unperturbed by parishioners. I am not marrying you to get either a Sunday School Superintendent or a parish visitor. You have to be yourself; anything else is—is—untenable, and besides I wouldn't like it."

"Will there be many men on your vestry like Uncle Tom, who wish they were ministers, and will tell you what to preach?"

"I will have to admit that he bothers me a little. You see, I thought the monkey ancestors were a dead issue. I think they are everywhere else except in the part of the South which H. L. Mencken likes to call the Bible Belt."

After this visit, the rest of the family visits were easy. There had never been another clergyman in our family, and uncles and aunts and grandmother and parents became sentimental about it. They remembered how Grandfather

had loved clergymen. He had frequently given them gifts of money, and trips, and he liked to invite them to dinner to see that they had a square meal. I began to feel sweetly sentimental about it myself, and a little like James Barrie's Lady Babbie. Only later I found that I was not the gypsy—Sherry was.

Upon his graduation from the Seminary, Sherry became a curate on the staff of St. Thomas's Church in New York. We could not be married and live in New York on his small salary, but I could visit New York and help him to spend it. It was on one of my visits that I found out about the contrasts in the life of a parish priest.

The rector was unavailable, and Sherry was asked to christen a baby in a penthouse apartment on Park Avenue. I was invited to come with him. We were admitted to the apartment by a liveried manservant. In the long paneled drawing-room a gay crowd had gathered. The women in their Worth gowns, who moved in an aura of expensive perfume, were out of the rotogravure section of the New York Times and the pages of Harper's Bazaar; the men trailed the more expensive odor of Wall Street.

Sherry went off to put on his vestments, and I took an inconspicuous stand against a wall on which hung some of Degas' Dancing Girls. A dowager raised her lorgnette and gave me a long look and then dropped the lorgnette and turned away. Presently Sherry came in, followed by a nurse carrying a small baby dressed in a long point-de-Venise christening robe. The improvised baptismal font was a solid pillar of tiny pink roses on which stood a silver bowl, intricate and beautiful enough to have been made by Benvenuto Cellini. The parents and god-parents disentangled themselves from the guests and formed a group around the font before the flower-banked mantel. The

parents, who were a little over-age, looked self-conscious, as if they had done a vulgar thing and would brazen it out in style. Immediately after the last words of the service, the baby was taken out of the room, and the christening became a cocktail party.

We left because Sherry had another visit to make. He hailed a taxi, which was cruising by the door, and gave the address of a tenement on Third Avenue. On hot nights I had seen women leaning out of tenement windows, their elbows resting on pillows, and I had heard of the rooms inside which had no windows. Here we were, entering an unlighted hall and pushing through the stale odors of unpleasant food. We climbed up to the second floor to an apartment in which an old woman lay dying in a windowless room. She lay on a white cot, and a piece of brown paper was arranged to shade her eyes from the glare of the electric light bulb which hung on a cord from the ceiling. Sherry sat down beside her, and leaned over to catch her whispered words. She asked for the twenty-third psalm, and he read it to her. The elevated rumbled by and shook every board and brick in the building. It shook the cot, and it drowned for a moment the sobbing of her daughter in the corner. Then Sherry knelt by the bed and prayed for the woman who was dying, and it all seemed quiet and serene. When he left, and he kissed me in the dark moldy hall, there were tears on my cheeks. I had seen him in a new role, and it was an impressive one.

The family saw to it that my silver was heavy. Mother, Grandmother and I had long, and what I thought then were dull, sessions with Mrs. Meade, who had sold linen to generations of Richmond housekeepers. Unfortunately I still knew nothing about housekeeping.

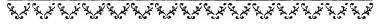
"What you get must be good," they said. "You probably won't ever be able to buy much for yourself, you know." It

was a family principle that if a thing cost a lot, it must be good. "Beware of bargains," we always said to each other. I had never known a parson who had any money besides his salary, and ministerial salaries are notably small. When you go into the church, while you do not exactly take a vow of poverty, you are prepared to accept the inevitable.

Of all my wedding presents, the one of which I was most proud was a pair of silver candlesticks from the office staff of the Reverend R. Cary Montague. They were inscribed "From the Office," and were a witness to my professional

experience.

Thus I entered the ministry after two years with Mr. Montague, the most unconventional clergyman in the Episcopal Church; with heavy silver and a large supply of linen sheets and table cloths; a great respect for expensive things, but not a penny of endowment; and some novels by Anthony Trollope.



FREDERICKSBURG

3

HAT IS THE RECTORY LIKE?" I asked Sherry a few weeks before the date we had set for our wedding. "I would like to go to Fredericksburg and see it before we move in. I haven't any mental picture of us, no backdrop. From the twenty-fourth of January on we and our wedding presents seem to fall off into space. Let me come up and look things over, and I can decide where to place the furniture."

I went up on a Sunday expecting to sit in the back of the church and meet Sherry after the service for a quiet inspection of the rectory. After church Sherry met me, but he had the Senior Warden with him. That was too bad, but of course I could not be rude to the Senior Warden and tell him that I would like to look at the rectory alone with Sherry. Houses still seemed to me to be personal affairs. We started across the little churchyard, and I looked back and saw that the whole congregation was following us. I did not feel like the Lady Babbie any longer, I felt awkward and shy and self-conscious.

They were proud of their sweet little rectory, and it had been freshly painted and papered with a lovely oatmeal paper which they assured me would make a good background for anything. I know now that vestries and woman's auxiliaries are always anxious for the clergyman's wife to see the rectory for the first time in good condition, and they are inclined to select wall paper which does not show much,

and I have always had a secret desire for red cabbage roses. There was I admiring oatmeal paper for the first time and making my first effort to be grateful to a congregation. And there was Sherry, pathetically eager for us to like each other.

A few weeks later we and our wedding presents moved into the rectory.

We arrived before the van, and while we were walking about listening to the echo of our footsteps in the empty house, we heard a great racket on the front porch, and the booming voice of Uncle Tom calling, "Maria! Sherry! Hello there!" The front door had swung shut and locked, but he had pushed up the living-room window, and there he was climbing in, holding out a brace of quail to us in one hand, and a carton of oysters in the other. "I heard that today was the day," he said, "and since I had to be in Fredericksburg I thought I would start you off right."

It was a disarming gesture, and I forgot what a pest he could be, and how he had frightened me with his ideas of a parson's wife.

In a course on pastoral theology at the Theological Seminary in Virginia, Sherry had learned that the first two years in a parish belong to your predecessor. Young men in a classroom who think the world is waiting for them are not disturbed by that. But when they go into their first parish, they find that it is actually haunted by the man who has been ministering there. If he had been a good minister, he shared the crises in the lives of his people. The Christianity of the new rector faces its first test and he must resist the temptation to practice black magic to lay the ghost.

Washington Gladden, himself a great minister, made an analysis of congregations. No matter how bad a clergyman is, one third of his congregation thinks no one else can ever possibly be as good, said Dr. Gladden; no matter how good

he is, to one third a change would be welcome; on the middle third depends his success or failure. Our predecessor in our Fredericksburg parish had been a successful man: he had converted his middle third.

I have never met the man, but he was everywhere. He had lived in the rectory with his widowed mother who adored him, and the parishioners were to him wife and children. He had no private life which did not include them. I received the impression that he paid a daily call on each parishioner. He kept open house in the rectory and what he bequeathed me was a goldfish bowl, a thing no bride appreciates.

The parishioners welcomed us in spite of their loyalty to the Reverend Mr. Doe. "It is what he would want us to do," said one. They brought us jellies and cakes and rolls, and they brought us flowers from their gardens. They stopped in at the rectory when they went by, and I was overwhelmed by the number of older friends which I had suddenly acquired. I did not meet anyone in town my own age for some time. My contemporaries seemed to be frightened off by Sherry's profession.

When the day came for me to attend my first meeting of the Woman's Auxiliary, I looked over my trousseau and wondered what I should wear.

"Don't put any rowan berries in your hair," said Sherry.

"This is a serious organization, and they wouldn't be appreciated."

"Of course not," I answered. "Even if I have never been to a Woman's Auxiliary meeting before except to keep Mr. Montague from trampling on the women, remember I was working for the church when you married me. I'll wear the black dress with the white collar which cost my father a pretty penny, but you wouldn't know it."

"Black might mean anything. You had better wear navy blue. Only good women wear navy blue."

"You've been reading women's pages. Just see what matrimony has done for you!"

While I dressed I watched the members of the Auxiliary going up the path into the parish house, which was between the rectory and the church.

The afternoon sunlight was slanting in through the windows of the bare little parish hall when I entered, and I slipped quietly into a seat in the back row. Miss Molly Fitzhugh was conducting a study of Chinese missions. Miss Molly was tall and gaunt and aristocratic looking. She wore her rusty black dress with a regal air, and her battered black hat with its jaunty bow sat on her head like a coronet. With a tightly rolled umbrella she was pointing to a map of China on the wall.

"Isn't that where Henry Ruffin is, Molly?" Miss Eliza Randolph asked.

"Yes, it is," she said. The point of her umbrella swung slowly down to the floor, and a new light came into Miss Molly's face. "And I have often wondered how on earth Henry Ruffin ever went into the church. If there ever was a little boy who was an imp of Satan—"

"They so often do, Molly. The bad boys go into the church, I mean," said Miss Eliza.

"And I wouldn't give two cents for one who wasn't!" said a crackling old voice from the corner. "I have taught Sunday School for fifty years and give me a boy with spirit and imagination every time. If you want a clergyman who was a pious little boy, Molly, you had better join the Methodists or the Presbyterians."

"I don't care, it was a great surprise to me when Henry went to China. Anyway it is nice to know of one missionary who has some money of his own. But of course we mustn't let that affect our offering."

With that Miss Molly returned to China, and I looked out of the window. What I saw was years and years of Woman's Auxiliary meetings stretching up the street.

What I was too young to see, and was not to realise until later, was the effectiveness of those women multiplied by the thousands of churches all over the country. They were Marthas and they were Marys. Without them the clergy would be deprived of a vast working organism, and they would be lonely men.

Fredericksburg is conveniently placed on the highway known as Route 1, and streams of clergymen dropped in at our rectory, and they and Sherry talked all night. One night when he was entertaining in this way, I went to bed at the usual decent hour, and I woke up at two o'clock and realized that Sherry and the visiting clergyman were still talking in the living-room below. I called him and asked if he knew what time it was. He was indignant and said I was never to do that again. Talking all night was an occupational recreation I would have to get used to, and I should be glad it was not poker parties, he said, and besides he got some good ideas that way.

Sherry's office or "study" was in the rectory, and as a preacher he was supposed to spend a certain amount of time there, reading and writing. But it embarrassed me to have him around the house. I was not used to a man in the house after nine o'clock in the morning. There were some Civil War veterans in Richmond who had retired from anything more active than whittling, after the war, and they were still sitting around, but we secretly considered even these heroes a little shiftless. My own father is a lawyer, and has always left early for a long, mysterious day at the office. We

never thought of calling him except in direst emergency. Once when we were very small and newly moved to the country, our house caught fire, and my mother felt that she might telephone my father about it. He was in court and she felt she was justified in having him called out. He asked her if it was a bad fire, and she reminded him that the house was old, and frame, and might go quickly. He replied since that was so, he had better go back to court and win his case. He did, and she climbed up on the sloping roof, the wind blowing her long skirts, to pour salt on the fire as the cook suggested, while we stood on the ground below and watched the colored flames in fascination. Now here was Sherry, as easy to reach as the Civil War veterans, and I devised errands to take him downtown.

Each clergyman works out his own best method for composing his sermons. Before I knew any clergymen, if I thought about it at all, I thought it was all done on Saturday. I found I was wrong. Mr. Montague selected a text on Monday and experimented with it during the week, preaching on it sometimes as often as fourteen times in his various institutions until it was a nicely finished product for the Sunday evening service which he held in a large moving-picture theatre. I was not prepared for Sherry's pattern which requires some sitting around, and he patiently explained the process to me.

The three types of sermon are the textual, the topical and the expository. In the textual, the text is detached from its place in the Bible and the preacher does what he likes with it. In the expository, he preaches on a passage in the Bible using some verse, or words in it, for emphasis. In the topical, the preacher is entirely on his own, and the result is such titles as "There'll Always Be a Santa Claus," or "A Yoke for Two," both of which are authentic, I read them in the newspaper. Newspapers favor topical sermons, they are easier

to play up. When we first moved to Fredericksburg the preacher around the corner was holding a revival with great success. At least the church was packed with people, and we heard that the offerings were large. The collection plates were equipped with little flashlights, and at the words "Let your light so shine—" the flashlights were clicked on, and the ushers proceeded to collect. He was preaching on such subjects as "The Painted Queen," and "The Greatest Liar in Fredericksburg," which brought out most of the citizenry.

Sherry preached expository sermons, and he fcllowed the church year. On Monday he read the lessons and the epistle and gospel for the following Sunday and either a section seemed to stand out clearly as needing exposition, or he had to search for one which did. Then his mind started to work on it, and in Fredericksburg he would sit on the front porch and look blank whenever he had a chance, and the neighbors and the Woman's Auxiliary would think he was lazy, and that he should be calling like Mr. Doe used to, and I asked him please to at least hold a book. On Wednesday he was ready to look up references, and by Friday it was all thought out, word for word, and there were a few notes scratched on the back of an envelope which he kept in his pocket. On Saturday night he did not want to think about it and welcomed any party or entertainment which might offer. On Sunday morning he still welcomed diversion, and kept the door of his study, when it was in the parish house, wide open. Thoughts might still come to him on Sunday morning even after climbing into the pulpit and announcing his text, and then he had to make a quick decision whether to accept or reject them, as these thoughts might be the best of the week, or they might ruin the sermon, or they might just make it long.

The direct contrast to Sherry's method was that of a friend of ours. He left the dinner table and went into his study at eight o'clock on Saturday night. There he read all the appropriate selections for the next day, and then he sat and thought until his thoughts took form and he began to write down all the clutter of ideas which came into his head. He looked up material which he needed, and made a loose outline. By this time it was about two o'clock, and he lav down on the couch in his study and went to sleep, having set the alarm clock for four o'clock. At four o'clock, he brewed a cup of coffee, studied his sermon, checked his references, and made the tight outline which was to go into the pulpit with him. By now it was time to take a shower and go across the yard to the church for the eight-o'clock service of Holy Communion. He came home for breakfast, and then at nine-thirty o'clock he had to open Sunday School. After that, it was woe to any Sunday School teacher or parish visitor who stopped him with a problem. He went back to his study and preached his sermon as he would deliver it, even to the gestures, and he went into the pulpit, as he said, "red hot." After the service, he had a bowl of soup and collapsed into bed to sleep it off.

At first I thought that I should help with Sherry's sermons, and that precipitated bad feeling. I made a few attempts to find out what he was going to preach about and to give him some ideas of my own, which were not appreciated. And so I retired as a preacher.

A salary check of a hundred and twenty-five dollars does not go very far. After we paid the wages of the cook, there was little left over. The cook, Emma, had trouble with her feet and white tennis shoes were the only kind she could wear. A few years before, she might have worn a bandanna since she was what we like to call "the old-fashioned kind"; now she was modern enough to have replaced the bandanna with a ruffled boudoir cap. Her rolls and batterbread and

lemon pie were perfect, and she was proud of working for the preacher. We were punctilious about having family prayers as long as we lived in Fredericksburg — Emma expected them. Besides she had a follower, a dignified gentleman from the next farm, who came to town frequently and sat in our kitchen and tried to persuade Emma to marry him. We felt that she weighed him against the privilege of being family at prayers at the rectory. With dignity she served us the cheap dishes which I had discovered, in our pretty silver bowls. I was not a good housekeeper, and the town had poor markets. Even if that had not been true, we could not have paid for both food and a cook, and the cook was more important.

We needed another source of income, and we began to look around us. Families are generous, but my experience with them is that as financial aids they are unpredictable. Sometimes they think "young people must learn to curb their extravagant tastes and live on their salary," and then they repent with a generous check, but it is hard to know what to expect. We studied the possibilities, and I filed an application to be a salesgirl at the Five and Ten. I always had a curiosity about what used to be called rather smugly "how the other half lives" but it did not occur to me that if I really settled down to a ministerial salary, I could find out.

Bedside tables are significant even if they hold nothing by the side of the lamp except a radio and a telephone; that indicates that at the end of the day, one is too tired to do anything but take what comes. My bedside table held The Saturday Evening Post and The Saturday Review of Literature. The Saturday Evening Post had been there ever since it had carried P. G. Wodehouse's first serial, "The Damsel in Distress." The Saturday Review of Literature was added for the pleasure of reading Christopher Morley and because it carried contests with a cash award. All the children who

read St. Nicholas have grown up into adults who will enter any contest, whether it is a soap firm offering ten thousand dollars for a limerick or The Saturday Review of Literature offering a ten-dollar gold piece for "The Remark That Ends the Conversation." I did not win their contest. They favored "I almost had caviar but then I didn't." The subject has stayed in my mind and I have made a private collection of the Remark Final. I think I could win it now with "Don't you just love culture?" or "You look like someone I know but I can't think who it is," or "Oh, Mrs. Sheerin, I didn't recognize you out of church."

Sherry was more successful with his efforts to add to our income. On his bedside table were a Bible, a prayer book and a football manual. The football manual meant fifteen dollars a week to him through the football season. Having played football for Kenyon and for Columbia, he could qualify as a referee for high school games, and this he did. Saturday afternoons through October and November found him on any field within a radius of twenty-five miles, wearing white knickers and an old Columbia sweater, running with the ball while I sat in the bleachers and took a non-partisan view of contests between Fredericksburg High and Fork Union. The Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia, is big league and paid twenty dollars. After the game there, we went in to Washington and spent the night at the Willard Hotel and saw a splendid production of The School for Scandal from the best seats in the theatre. Is there a better way to spend twenty dollars?

There was no point in trying to budget a hundred and twenty-five dollars. After the football season, something would show up. When it did, it was the evils of drink which came to our aid. On the staff of the Fredericksburg newspaper, The Free Lance—Daily Star, was a brilliant and eccentric young man of fine family who was one of our parish-

ioners. He was a faithful and interested attendant at church, and he even came to the Bible Class when he was sober, but he was not often sober. He had given birth to one novel, either with or without the aid of alcohol, and it made him rich for a short time, but he seemed unable to write another. He traveled about in search of inspiration until his money was gone, and then he returned to Fredericksburg where he resumed his old routine of working on the newspaper, getting roaring drunk, and then haunting the church in abject repentance. It was apparent that he would never write even good news stories on this schedule, and the newspaper became impatient; they felt that they had suffered long enough for a little doubtful prestige. The time had clearly come for him to take a cure and he left town. An arrangement was made for the job to be held by the rector until the reporter could come back to town a new man. For this good deed, Sherry was paid thirty-five dollars a month. We had breakfast and family prayers a little earlier, and then Sherry left for his beat, which had been the reporter's beat except that Sherry skipped the bootlegger. He went first to the Fire Hall in case any alarms had been turned in during the night which we had not heard. The undertaker was visited next. After that he went to see Mr. Jennings, the newsdealer. His paper boys covered the town, and little boys that age have a natural instinct for news, beside such routine items as who had stopped the paper because they were going away for a trip, and the newsdealer knew before anyone except the milkman, when they would return. After visiting Mr. Jennings he went to the Western Union office where he learned of deaths and births which had occurred in the Northern Neck, which is that strip of Virginia lying between the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers, and depending on Fredericksburg for its contact with the outside world. From Western Union he went to the railroad station to talk with the station master,

and by that time the police court was open, to be followed on special unfortunate occasions by the juvenile court. After lunch he visited the jail in the dual capacity of reporter and chaplain, and then he was ready for the Woman's Auxiliary. Still substituting on the newspaper, he wrote a human interest article for each Saturday's paper, and his literary style varied between the style he had used when he was on the staff of *The Columbia Jester* and the burning "topics" which he might have been tempted to preach on instead of the expository style which he had been taught to use.

This only lasted for the duration of the cure, and then Sherry got a raise by adding a colonial parish fourteen miles out of town. He had services there on Sunday afternoons at four o'clock, and tried to spend a few days a month in the county, calling. Fortunately his country parishioners were not demanding, and they admired his preaching extravagantly. On the first Sunday in the month, he brought a heavy brown paper bag home with him from the service, and dropped it with a clank onto the top of the piano. I looked into it, and it was full of nickels and dimes and pennies, just as it had been put into the offering plate and blessed on the altar. I could hear the choir singing: "All things come of Thee, O Lord, and of Thine own have we given Thee!" And here it was on my piano. When the salary came in the form of a check from the treasurer of the church, I could forget the altar. When it came in the raw, like this, it oppressed me. When I recovered from my feeling of awful responsibility, I turned the coins onto a plate and looked through them for a fraternity pin.

My grandfather, John Green Williams, of Orange County, Virginia, had attended the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg before the War, and by War I mean, of course, the Civil War, or as it has been called more recently the War Between the States. At William and Mary, he joined a fra-

ternity. Then the shot was fired at Fort Sumter, the War was on and soon Virginia was involved. Grandfather gave his fraternity pin to some girl whose name has been lost to us, and he went off to be a courier on the staff of General Jubal Early. Fifty years later my father received a package from Bishop Kinsolving, the Bishop of Brazil. The package contained the fraternity pin which had Grandfather's name on the back, and which Bishop Kinsolving had recognized when it had appeared in a church offering. Anything, I thought, might show up on a collection plate.

The offering from our county church helped to pay for the groceries and the cook. My father still bought my clothes, and Sherry's uncle died and Sherry inherited some fine tweed suits and a cutaway.

In Fredericksburg our church was known as "the other church." It was only fifty years old. St. George's Church, our rival parish, had stood on the corner of Princess Anne and Charlotte Streets for over a hundred and fifty years. The best of Virginia was buried in its churchyard. The pews in St. George's Church were owned and had been handed down from generation to generation. The Senior Warden of Trinity Church had inherited a pew in St. George's, and he would not have sold it for anything. When there was a special service at St. George's, we would receive an invitation well ahead of time from some member of the congregation to come and sit in his pew. That should have been social recognition enough for anyone; it meant that they accepted us because I had ancestors buried in the churchyard, and an important one was under the front steps.

We had little social life besides the invitations to sit in a pew at St. George's, and I looked sadly at my evening dresses. They seemed to be one of the things a parson's wife gave up, and I was sorry because I loved evening dresses. They were something magic for Cinderella from a fairy Godmother. I had always bought mine for irrelevant reasons. The pale gray chiffon with the silver lace had made me think of an ice storm in the country; the pink with the rhinestone design was the early morning dew I had seen on rose petals; and the yellow might have looked like just another yellow dress to everyone else, to me it was the sun on a wheat field. I shut the closet door on them sadly. "They will be in excellent condition for the children to dress up in," I thought.

And then we were given a surprising party. It came not entirely without warning. Mrs. Boogher, the wife of the rector of St. George's, tried to prepare me; she was wise in the ways of small town parishes.

"Just wait till you have a Pounding Party!" she said during one of our long, cozy visits together when we discussed rectory life and she gave me the benefit of her twenty years' experience.

"What happens? It sounds formidable; it isn't like birth-day poundings, I hope."

"Oh, no, the parishioners come unexpectedly some evening, and they bring a pound of this and a pound of that."

I did not think it really would happen. They had already been so generous to me, and my storeroom was full of pickles and preserves. Sherry and I spent our evenings reading aloud, or rather I made hook rugs and needle-point chair seats, and embroidered a Spanish shawl, and Sherry read aloud. He read Thackeray and James Barrie, especially the plays of Barrie.

One evening he was reading Quality Street, and just as the knock, the dashing knock of Mr. Valentine Brown, the handsome hero, startled the occupants of the blue and white room in the home of the Misses Throssel, a loud knock sounded on the rectory door. We resented the interruption but Sherry put down the little book and went to answer it.

I heard him say, "Come in! Do come in! We have visitors, Maria!"

They were all there, the whole congregation. They overflowed the little living-room and the study and into the dining-room, and each person had brought a gift, "a pound of this, and a pound of that," just as Mrs. Boogher had told me they would. Sherry's piano filled a quarter of the living-room, and everything was always put on the piano. Now the piano was stacked high with marmalade and brandied peaches and chutney and chow-chow, everything that these experienced housekeepers could produce. They had brought butter and eggs, and one famous cook had brought a tremendous chocolate cake. The Lord was with me: I had the presence of mind to cut the cake and hand it around. It became a gay party, and I was glad they had come. Other congregations have been too sophisticated for a pounding party, but no other congregation that we have known has given as much to the church. There was something sacred about those gifts, and I felt a little as I had when I first realized that our salary came by way of the altar.

When my mother told me the facts of life, she did not tell me anything about calls, the kind for which one puts on one's best dress and Sunday hat, and carries a card case. She may not have known anything about them herself since she never went away from home to live in a strange town. Grandmother knew about them, but her system was late Victorian or Edwardian. She had "Wednesdays" engraved in a corner of her calling cards. On Wednesday afternoons she sat on the fragile sofa in the drawing-room and waited for the Wednesday ladies who were driven to the door in their victorias, and drank tea without removing their white gloves. The full, soft folds of the skirts of Grandmother's gray chiffon, or her blue velvet dresses, trailed across the hearth rug,

and the firelight danced on the tea set. Polite conversation drifted up to the playroom. Then came the war, and Grandfather's death, and automobiles, and Wednesday became just another day. Nobody told me that there were places and circumstances that still required calls.

It was up to the Woman's Auxiliary tactfully to teach the new minister's wife some manners. And it was not only my manners they worried about. Twenty years ago Fredericksburg was too small for two Episcopal churches, and each parishioner assumed undue importance, and for something besides his soul. Neither church could afford to be casual about a lost parishioner. Each church was held together by dogged determination and hard work and pride. I had never seen anything like this jealous love for a church, or such cheerful, eager sacrifice. When it was made clear to me that I was expected to work too, I did it grudgingly. I did not like church suppers and church sales, but it seemed to me that a climax was reached when Miss Molly Fitzhugh telephoned me and said, "Maria, honey, I hear Mrs. Pennington is in town for just a little while. You may not know who Mrs. Pennington is, dear, because they moved to New York just before you came, when her husband became president of Consolidated Aluminum. She still sends three hundred dollars to Trinity every year. But they are thinking about buying one of those big, old houses, you know, across the river, and I hear St. George's has got all its guns set to get her to buy a pew over there. Now, Maria, you get on your best hat, and I'll come for you and we'll call on Mrs. Pennington. We can't lose her to St. George's, you know."

I went meekly enough, but there was murder in my heart. Miss Molly had a pure motive, she was doing it for the church, but somehow my living was involved, and besides I felt exploited. I was still cross when I told Sherry about it. He laughed at "the guns of St. George's" and told me to stop

being self-conscious and to appreciate Miss Molly; and he said that, after all, we had to eat, or at least to pay Emma; and he said that he and Mr. Boogher, our rival rector and one of our best friends, would worry about the parishioners who drifted back and forth between the two churches.

Sherry was experimenting. He wanted to find where he should put the emphasis in his own ministry. His father had preached the social gospel, and had been drawn into institutional work, and naturally had given Sherry a great interest in the underprivileged. The problems of capital and labor challenged the church's responsibility in the sociological field. Sherry had written his bachelor's thesis on psychology and religion, and it was here that his natural interest lay. I know that it was a temptation to him to put preaching first. He liked to preach, and the easiest thing would have been to decide to rise or fall by that. But his interest in people had a stronger pull, and he wisely decided that if his preaching were to be effective, he could not live in an ivory tower; instead he must meet people where they are.

When George Washington rode into Fredericksburg to visit his mother, she lived in the yellow frame house which stands on the corner of Lewis and Charles Streets, and Fredericksburg was an important city of seven thousand inhabitants. When we arrived in town in February 1925, it still had a population of seven thousand. Little colored children played on the slave block on Commerce Street; "Kenmore," the home of Betty Washington, George's sister, was shedding its roof piece by piece, and the tourists who drove through town without stopping did not know what historic sights they missed.

Not long before us, a new element had moved in, and it had come quietly. A factory had been built by astute northern owners, who planned to take full advantage of the cheap

labor in the South. A bus was sent around the country every morning to collect the workers, and they were brought in to the factory where they were paid by the piece for their work. Many parents went off in the bus, leaving little children in cabins to take care of themselves as best they could through the long day. When country people come to town, they make new friends and they learn things. Maggie Wrenn heard of The Children's Home Society, a child-placing agency, and it sounded to Maggie like a very fine way to dispose of her five children, the oldest of whom was eight. She applied to The Children's Home Society, which had its headquarters in Richmond, and the Society asked Sherry to investigate the case. Because they are naturally suspicious, they wanted to know, among other things, if Maggie was trying to get rid of the children so that she could be married again. Sherry drove out to the backwoods cabin, and there he found terror and confusion. The children were all screaming helplessly. Just before he had driven up, the youngest, a two-vear-old, had thrust his hand into the stove and been horribly burned. Sherry found the county nurse and the baby was given first aid and taken to the hospital. He reported that the children could certainly not be left as they were. There was no money unless Maggie worked, and she was bettering nothing by working. The children would have to be made wards of the Society. As soon as Maggie was free of them, she married again.

At the opposite pole were the cases of poverty and pride. Decayed gentility is hard to help. "Ever since the war, my dear—" they were fond of saying, and I explained to Sherry that they meant the War Between the States. These people were actually proud of their poverty; it meant that their family had not gotten a corner on sugar or flour after the war; it was a sign and symbol that they had never buried the hatchet and trafficked with the Yankees. Now they

would rather starve than accept help from anyone, which was admirable but irritating.

Sherry could not make up his mind about the necessity for routine calling, but calls on people who needed his help and calls on the sick were important to him. Out of this pastoral work came his consciousness of the need of a new hospital in Fredericksburg to replace the shabby, frame building which was called the Mary Washington Hospital. At night he would wake up and worry about "Old Mrs. Hallett on the third floor of that firetrap." He instigated a campaign and the new, fireproof Mary Washington Hospital was built.

This was not done in the twinkling of an eye. Firms which did nothing but organize and run campaigns to raise money had developed out of the bond rallies of the first World War, and Sherry thought this was just what Fredericksburg needed. The membership of the hospital board consisted of sixth-generation conservative Fredericksburgers - and Sherry. It is a commentary on his persuasive powers that a professional campaign manager was engaged. Perhaps the board thought as I did, that having hired a firm at a large price to raise the required money, by some magic it would be produced. That, of course, does not happen. Our campaigner, Mr. Wardwell, came and went, because the Mary Washington Hospital was not the only iron he had in the fire. Whenever he got off the train in Fredericksburg and walked up the street everybody was aware of the new element in town. His business was to see that the board and the campaign committee did not relax for a minute. He taught them how to use one name which had reader appeal to draw another name with reader appeal until there was an impressive list of important people who "invite you to subscribe-" I worried about such obvious strategy, but it worked in spite of my cynicism. Mr. Wardwell prodded the campaigners into remembering all the rich people they had ever met, and the campaign was not confined to Fredericksburg. Everyone in the East should want to share in building a hospital to the memory of Mary, the mother of Washington. Mr. Wardwell made a sort of game of it. He kept in close touch with the rectory, both when he was in town and when he was out of town. I never seemed to catch on to his ways. When the telephone rang and the operator said, "Buffalo is calling," I would call breathlessly to Sherry: "Sherry, it's Buffalo! What church is vacant in Buffalo?" It was Mr. Wardwell. He telephoned from New Orleans and Wilmington and Chicago and I never remembered when I heard the long-distance operator that it was just Mr. Wardwell. Finally it was over and the hospital materialized.

We sat on the sofa, the wife of the prospective vestryman and I, and she did most of the talking. She told me how much her husband appreciated her for her good cooking, and because she never for a moment was careless of her appearance, and that they had slept in a double bed for twenty years. She told me what a pal she was to her daughters, they thought of her as just their age, and all the young people in town came running to her to talk things over. Then she took both my hands and looked earnestly into my eyes and said:

"The first year of married life is very hard, dear, and you must let me be a pal to you. You must make this your second home, and you needn't ever feel like a parson's wife here. And you can tell me everything, just everything."

She could not have known how she frightened me. I was not afraid of the first year of married life, but I was in a panic at the thought of an intimate friend to whom I was to tell everything. I knew I must be polite, because we had been

told that if we could only get Mr. Drake interested in the church he would make a grand vestryman, but if it meant a pal for me, I was opposed to the idea.

Sherry, sitting across the room with the prospective vestryman, was having a lovely time. He was developing a thought, and preachers soon get into the habit of taking twenty minutes to develop a thought. Finally I caught his eye, and broke into his stream, and suggested that we go home. Mrs. Drake slid her arms around me and kissed me and repeated her offer.

The next day when I went to market I saw my pal. Fortunately she was still several blocks away and I went into the nearest shop, which was a fruit store run by one of the few Italian families in town. It was decorated with strings of cardboard bananas, and on the green painted shelves were a few baskets of sickle pears, which I did not particularly want. While I was trying in a distracted sort of way to decide between sickle pears and cardboard bananas, I realized that, silhouetted against the window in the back of the store, there was a Luini madonna. The wife of the proprietor, the Madonna of the Fruit Stall, was padding an orange crate, and lining it with pale blue, flowered cloth to make a bed for the baby which was soon to be born. Her dark hair was parted in the middle and drawn back into a loose knot at the back of her neck, and her full, shapeless dress had a surprising grace. When she looked up at me with the wise, withdrawn look of a Luini, I had an impulse to say, "I am going to have a baby too, may I bring my sewing down and we can sew together?"

She looked away, and I knew that she did not need my friendship either. I hastily bought some hard, green little pears and went about my marketing, thinking of Mrs. Drake and the madonna and me. I must not break into this world of Italian Old Masters and cardboard bananas, and Mrs. Drake would not break into mine if I could help it. I was going to be a poor minister's wife: reserves were too important to me, and people too absorbing to let into my life indiscriminately.



4

AT THE TIME of one of the Great Festivals of the church, a rectory wife might as well have a baby. It is a gesture, an indequate effort, to remind the rector that Christmas day, or Easter, was always such a nice family day. It may or may not take the rector's mind off the show he is putting on, and focus it for a moment on her. He is the chief actor, the stage manager and the director of dramas which are new and fresh every year.

Sherry has always wanted everyone to have whatever he or she needs and desires from the church in the way of services.

"A sunrise service is so inspiring, can't you give us a sunrise service?" asked one parishioner when Sherry was planning his first Easter in Fredericksburg.

"An eight o'clock Communion is what we have always had," said another.

"Nine o'clock you will find is the most convenient hour for most people," said another.

"Of course we have a Communion at the eleven o'clock service," said a vestryman.

"We have our Sunday School celebration on Easter Sunday afternoon," said the Sunday School superintendent.

"I will have what they want me to have," said Sherry, and he planned what each of the hundred and fifty communicants requested.

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Then Emma came to me: "I ain't never worked the day my Lord riz," she said. "I'se goin' home and I'se goin' to a all-day meetin' at my church."

"This is the day which the Lord hath made," I said firmly to myself, "and the parson's wife must rejoice and be glad in it." But the outlook was dismal.

By Christmas I was playing a competing drama of my own, and I was not jealous of the church services which took Sherry's entire attention. Charlie was almost a Christmas baby, and having a Christmas baby is an emotional experience; Christmas carols take on a poignancy which was not there before. The young mother cannot help identifying herself with the Christmas story.

On this particular Christmas Eve night, while Sherry was busy elsewhere, I watched a group of carolers coming down the street. With a thrill of pleasure I saw them stop beneath my window. I suppose there is nothing new in the experience I had that Christmas Eve night. For most of us there comes a time when the Christmas story becomes real, when we feel it as well as know it. Because of my baby and the bright stars in the clear sky, and because of the sweet music of the carolers as they sang about it, I understood, from that moment on, a little better what happened in the stable in Bethlehem.

Charlie was born two weeks later, and the parishioners admired him, and were so proud of him that I began to have a new and softer feeling for them.

My education had not included the care and feeding of children, and sometimes I felt quite hopeless, but I did not want to go to the parishioners for advice or comfort. That is, until the dreadful day when Charlie fell off the bed. He screamed and screamed, and I was sure he had killed himself. We both cried. Holding him tight in my arms, with the tears streaming down my face, I saw Mrs. Thornton going

by into the parish house, and I called her frantically. She came in and took the baby into her experienced, capable hands, and she quickly quieted him.

"The Lord takes care of drunken men and babies," she said, as she gave him back to me. "They both relax when they fall. Most babies fall off the bed at least once. Look at him now, he is laughing at us." I smiled through my tears, and a great barrier was down. From then on the Woman's Auxiliary and I had long, comfortable talks. We exchanged obstetrical experiences, and what to do for babies when they would swallow buttons, and would not swallow Cream of Wheat. Being a parson's wife still did not seem a youthful occupation, but its relationships became easier.

Getting ahead in the ministry usually means a change from one parish to another. We wondered where the ministry would take us, and we did our share of dreaming about the ideal parish which we hoped would call us some day. Then I became ambitious. There are some beautiful churches by the sea and in the mountains, and while we were dreaming, I thought we might as well dream up one of these.

"But how does a clergyman get on the summer circuit?"

I asked.

"Preferment," said Sherry, who was wise in the ways of the ministry, having been in it all his life. "In England it's all preferment. The duke of this, or the squire of that has the 'living' to assign. Fortunately we have not too much of that in this country. But it still holds unofficially in the summer churches. You have a rich and powerful winter parishioner who is high mogul in St. Mary's-by-the-Sea, and when St. Mary's-by-the-Sea becomes vacant, you get it: or do you?"

"Of course we want to go to New England. I know very little about resorts. Which shall it be?"

"I have always wanted to go back to Hyannis Port, ever since the summer Connie Simmons and I were life guards there. And St. Andrew's-by-the-Sea is the prettiest little stone church you ever saw, and it is built on what is probably the highest point on Cape Cod."

We thought more about our future than we should have, and then the Bishop put us in our place with a sermon.

"The Lord gave them their desire, and their souls grew lean withal," was his text. We took it to heart and came down to earth for a while anyway, winning one bout with ambition.

I had always known about bishops. Grandfather liked them. I was aware of the big sleeves and fluted cuffs which a bishop wears before I had any idea what he was talking about. When I was thirteen years old, I wore a white dress to church, and the Bishop put his hands on my head and the event meant more to my parents than it did to me. I knew that it took three hours to make a bishop, and that seemed to me an interminable length of time to spend in church making anything.

When I married the parson, the bishop became a formula. I hit on what I considered a beautiful phrase for the thank-you notes for wedding presents, and I used it at least a hundred times: "Your coffee cups are lovely. I'll save them for a great occasion in the rectory, such as when the Bishop comes . . ."

The Bishop of Virginia was a large man with a drooping moustache which of course tempted the young clergymen to refer to him as the Old Walrus. When he came to our rectory for an official visitation, I was sentimental about him, especially when I found that he was preaching the same sermon he had preached when he confirmed me. Sherry frankly admitted that he found him formidable. He had spent twenty-two years as a missionary in Brazil, and while

there he had translated the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek into Portuguese. That is probably why he had taken his stand with the conservatives against the modernists, which was too bad, because when he added his big voice to a cause, it generally influenced the votes of the older clergy and lay delegates in the Councils of the Diocese.

When he first went to Brazil, his career as a missionary was all but cut short by his skill as a pool player. He innocently accepted an invitation to join a game, and at the end he was the winner, and was handed a sum of money which was larger than his annual salary. The future Bishop of Virginia was in a spot. The losers said it was a debt of honor and they had to pay it. The young missionary took the money to his Bishop and gave it to him with his resignation. The Bishop joyfully accepted the money, but not the resignation. It is said that he patted the young man on the head and advised him to go out and play more pool, and together they would build churches. When I asked him if the story was true, he was nice enough not to deny it.

When we pray "for those whose duties are difficult or burdensome," I have always thought about missionaries. But this bishop had been brought back from Brazil to be Bishop of Virginia, and I did not see why he talked so much about his burdens, especially when he obviously enjoyed the chance to run things, which being a bishop gave him. Sherry was a little afraid of being swept aside when a matter of diocesan policy came up on which he would have to oppose the Bishop, and he expected that when the Bishop came next he would be talked to like a recalcitrant child. Instead the Bishop seemed to have more respect for Sherry after his opposition, and the only further evidence of domination was when Emma brought the roast chicken and put it on the dinner table, and the Bishop pointed to the second joint and said "Sheerin, I want that piece and nothing else."

He proved to be a pleasant house guest, and we appreciated his coming and staying for the night, it gave an impression of leisure and personal concern for his clergymen. We developed a loyalty to him, and we worked hard to get confirmation candidates.

In a town like Fredericksburg, with a minimum of floating population, a rector is dependent on what he calls "natural growth" for his confirmation classes, that is, the children of the Sunday School who reach the age of twelve or thirteen. On rare occasions we thought we recognized a good prospect outside of conventional lines. This prospect we invited for bridge, and our evenings over the bridge table were not without results on confirmation Sunday. Most people welcome an opportunity to talk about their souls, and to give their views on the church as it is and as it should be, and they will do it very easily if they feel that, different as yours might be, you are not too horrified by theirs to discuss them.

When the Diocesan Convention, or Council, as it is called in Virginia, met in St. George's Church, Fredericksburg, to elect an assistant, or co-adjutor, to the bishop, it followed the pattern set by St. Peter when he addressed the apostles who had met in Jerusalem to select a successor to the fallen Judas. The Bishop, Peter at that first one, and now William Cabell Brown, presided, and made an opening address containing the duties and qualifications. Nominations were made, prayers were said, and the vote was cast. The years between Peter and Brown had added something called politics, and I am afraid it was more politics than the Holy Spirit that interested me as I sat in the gallery with my toes through the balustrade and my chin on the rail.

Most diocesan politics take the form of high church — low church parties, each faction feeling called of God to suppress the other. There was no high church party in Virginia, but there was still feeling between the modernists and the

fundamentalists. The "old guard," meaning the conservative elder statesmen of the Diocese, including the Bishop, wanted to elect the Rt. Rev. Henry St. George Tucker, returned from being Missionary Bishop of the District of Kyoto, Japan. The younger men wanted his brother, the Reverend Beverly Tucker, who had succeeded Dr. Bowie as rector of St. Paul's Church in Richmond, and who was a militant modernist.

My father, a lay deputy to the convention, wrote a nominating speech which he was assured would elect his friend, St. George Tucker, on the first ballot. He carried the speech in his pocket to Baltimore where he was obliged to go on business before he could get to the council meeting.

Feeling and oratory ran high. Beverly Tucker was nominated, and he must be defeated. Dr. Downman, a typical fundamentalist who had been preaching old-time religion for fifty years, asked for the floor. With passion and fire he read from the Epistle for the consecration of a bishop "'... moreover he must have a good repo't of them that are without ..."

This was too much for Judge Scott, Senior Warden of Beverly Tucker's church. "I object!" he cried. "If anyone knows anything that is not of good repo't regyarding this man, let him speak now, or else be held for libel." The "repo't" was what Beverly Tucker believed on the interpretation of the Bible.

At this point the conservatives brought in their nomination, and it was not Bishop Tucker, since my father was still in Baltimore, it was Ernest M. Stires, rector of St. Thomas's Church, which had reached its zenith on Fifth Avenue, New York. The conservative party had focussed on beating Beverly Tucker, and they thought they could not do this with his brother, St. George. Dr. Ribble said in his nominating speech:

"... Some may think that Dr. Stires would not leave a church like St. Thomas's to become Bishop of Virginia, but I would remind you that Ernest Stires is a Virginian. Robert E. Lee was once faced with the question of whether he would stay with the Union or go with Virginia, and did not he find the call of Virginia stronger? Gentlemen, Ernest Stires, too, will answer the call of Virginia!"

That did not close the nominations by any means. Favorite rectors were nominated, and some people had nephews who were rising young clergymen, and nieces who had married clergymen, and there had to be speeches about all of them.

Beverly Tucker was elected, and my father came running up the hill from the train and found to his chagrin that he had missed the fun, but especially that the machine had broken down and his candidate had not been nominated. St. George was Bishop Brown's candidate, too, and Bishop Brown was infinitely depressed by what seemed to him a personal defeat. Beverly Tucker did not accept the election. The following year when the council met in Leesburg, St. George Tucker was nominated immediately and elected on the first ballot. My father had a chance to make his speech. And the good old Bishop finally died with the knowledge that all was well with his diocese.

The advantages of living next to the church outweighed the disadvantages, but one of the disadvantages was that I had a feeling of guilt if I did not attend all the services and meetings and church suppers which went on. Sometimes Sherry took a mean advantage of my guilt to fill another seat.

"You will come to the funeral this afternoon, won't you?" Sherry asked me.

"Whose funeral? The rector's wife doesn't have to be a professional mourner, does she? I don't like funerals."

"You remember that the young man who mended shoes on the corner, was drowned on Thursday. His wife is the sweetfaced woman who cashiered for him and who comes to church quite regularly. I am afraid there won't be anyone at the funeral. I promise not to ask you to come to funerals except when I think there won't be anyone else there."

"It's Emma's afternoon off, and who will take care of Charlie?" Then I relented. "I'll ask her to stay on. Or shall I bring Charlie? Together we can look like quite a crowd."

Emma, after the manner of her race, was most sympathetic and coöperative about the funeral. She said she would go downtown and get back in time for me to go.

I had a Paris dress and hat which my mother and father had brought me. The dress was a lovely shade of rose red. It had no waist line, in fact no figure showed anywhere, and the belt was low around my hips. The hat was a black stovepipe which came down to my eyebrows, with flat loops of rose and pink ribbon on one side. I could not have been more chic, but there was no place to wear it in Fredericksburg. In Richmond when you had a Paris dress and hat, you put them on and wore them to St. Paul's Church, and after church you walked up Franklin Street and Monument Avenue, and you knew you were not wasting anything on desert air. I thought of this nostalgically, and then in a spirit of abandon I put on my beautiful outfit and went out to walk Charlie until Emma came back and it was time for the funeral.

I was preoccupied with keeping Charlie on the sidewalk, but mostly with how Parisian I looked, and with what a pity it was that more people could not see me. Then I realized that although it was very early, car after car was driving up to the church door. It was not nearly time for the service

and the church was filling up rapidly. The town florist arrived and unloaded floral designs with streamers attached which said "Rest in Peace" in gold letters. By this time we were not alone on the sidewalk; all the children and all the colored people in that part of town had joined us to watch. Still Emma did not come back. I began to be impatient.

The funeral procession arrived. The widow, surrounded by her friends, got out of a limousine and went into church. Emma came limping around a corner, and I beckoned to her to hurry. I pushed Charlie into her arms, followed the pall-bearers, and squeezed into the back row of standees. Sherry looked attractive standing in the chancel surrounded by banks of floral tributes, and I remembered that I looked rather well myself, and I was glad I had worn the Paris clothes.

After the service at the cemetery, which I did not attend, Sherry was brought back to the rectory by the undertaker.

"How could you make such a mistake?" I asked him. "How could anybody be so popular and you not know it? It's the last funeral I go to as padding for you!"

"It is just as well you were there. I have the dope from the undertaker who drove me home. Johnny was the town bootlegger. The police are beginning to suspect foul play. They say Johnny was a good swimmer, and it is not reasonable for him to have drowned while doing a little quiet fishing on the Rappahannock River."

"And the moral of that will send me to funerals for years to come. No wonder there were so many carnation horse-shoes!"

The parson, deriving his name or nickname from the Latin word, *persona*, had once been an important person in his community. He represented education as well as the Church. His congregation led circumscribed lives before news and

information were funnelled into every home by radio and magazine, and the sophistication of Hollywood had not had its insidious effect on their ambitions. The people came to church eager to listen to the parson. They wanted to be preached to for an hour or more; it left them feeling uplifted and enlightened.

On the parson once had devolved the responsibility for the education of the children, and the Parson's Schools were the educational system in Virginia. The Reverend Mr. Berkeley held such a school in his parsonage in Amelia County, and my grandmother, Maria, was sent at the early age of nine years to boarding-school at Mr. Berkeley's. My father started his education under the Reverend Mr. Hansborough at Orange Court House, and the final authority through my childhood was a quotation from either Mr. Berkeley or Mr. Hansborough. After the war, Confederate officers returned to their ancestral plantations and started larger and more self-conscious schools, and we had Bellevue and Concord and Woodberry Forest. But Cap'n Walker of Woodberry Forest School, which my father later attended, was not the master of epigram, nor the custodian of ultimate wisdom that Mr. Hansborough was-either that or he did not talk as much.

By the time I knew parsons they had been relegated to the field of religious education and a twenty-minute sermon, but once in a while they were brought forth to at least endorse culture. Once a year, Fredericksburg was given a cultural shot in the arm through the efforts of Dr. Paul Pearson, owner and operator of The Swarthmore Chautauqua, and a committee visited Sherry and told him that it was up to him to be the local chairman for culture for the season. Dr. Pearson by-passed towns with a population of over fifty thousand or so, and I had never heard of Chautauquas, but Sherry had heard of them and was not averse to being prominent in

the local organization. Besides, he was always looking for any contact with pagans whom he might convert.

An advance agent came to town to work with Sherry on preliminary details, and this agent, a formidable dark-haired woman, became as much a part of our lives as Mr. Wardwell had been. She telephoned Sherry at all hours, and she paid him long visits, and she looked through me as if I had been a Blithe Spirit. This irritated me, and out of sheer boredom with their conversations, I developed a talent for innuendo which I did not know I had. By subtle insinuation, I persuaded Sherry that he was dealing with a femme fatale, and Sherry's effectiveness as local chairman was almost ruined. He could not have any more comfortable conferences with the dark-haired woman, he could not answer the telephone for fear it was she, and he dodged around street corners like a hunted creature. Every time he possibly could, he jumped into the car and drove out to Stafford County where his parishioners were surprised by the attentiveness of their rector.

Fortunately, the dark-haired woman moved on to the next town before our Chautauqua commenced; she was probably bewildered by the sudden change in the cordial spirit of the Fredericksburg chairman.

For ten days we reveled in culture. Dr. Henry Goddard Leach, editor of *The Forum*, made a speech on "What Is True Tolerance?" Sherry concocted such an introduction for him out of the skeleton information in the pages of *Who's Who*, that Dr. Leach carried a copy of it home with him, as he said, "to show my wife and various other people who don't know what a great guy I am." Colonel Carmi Thompson, recently returned from the Philippines where he had been Governor General, appeared on our platform. He owned a chain of newspapers in Ohio and had many other successful businesses, and he offered Sherry a job with him,

saying "a smart young man like you shouldn't be giving your life to a dying profession." Sherry could not convert him.

Before the Chautauqua was over, we had a lecture on interior decoration and a French Canadian who dressed in a French Canadian costume and read us French Canadian poetry which he had made up himself. We had a concert by Swiss Bell-Ringers and Yodelers, who ended their program with "Abide with Me" played on musical glasses, and we had a production of *The Little Minister*, in the cast of which there were at least two Nugents. On Sunday night all the Protestant churches were closed, and a big union service was held, at which Dr. Pearson preached, and we learned how close were the principles of Chautauqua and the church.

When Dr. Pearson swept up his sawdust and folded his tent, he left us in just the right mood for the next attraction, the Show Boat. It tied up in the Rappahannock River at the Water Street Dock for "A Gorgeous, Glorious Week of Comedy and Tragedy." The parson had done his stint, and he could revel now with the rest of Fredericksburg in "The James Adams Floating Theatre," which was as unpretentious as the Chautauqua had been ambitious.

The parishioners whom Sherry visited when Fredericksburg became too full of the dark-haired woman, gave us our only experience with the rural church.

The Episcopal Church for various historical reasons has been mainly a city church, but Maryland, where for a while in colonial days it was the "State Church," and Virginia are exceptions. Tidewater Virginia is full of pretty brick colonial churches set out in the country and usually surrounded by old graveyards. To many, Aquia Church of Overwharton Parish, Stafford County, built in 1752, is the most beautiful of all.

The church, cruciform in arrangement, contains one of the few three-decker pulpits in America. Its little semi-circular communion rail is unique and so is its congregation.

When Sherry was rector, the church had not been restored and there were still many names written on the walls left from the days when the Union Army had used it as a battle hospital. Under the Holy Table was a tablet on which was written "To The Race of The House of Moncure." The race were the descendants of Parson Moncure, a French Huguenot who had been the parson when the present church was built. The Communion silver was the gift of the Reverend William Scott, who was rector of the parish in 1690.

The Moncures were still prominent. On the vestry of twelve men, six were Moncures, and actually one did not have to remember many names, for if a parishioner was not a Moncure, he was a Waller, unless he was a Powers. Distinguishing nicknames had to be given such as "Pickle Dick" Moncure, "Sheriff Dick" Moncure, and "Bearded Dick" Moncure, for they all seemed to have been baptized Richard Chichester Lee Moncure.

These people were as aristocratic as it was possible to be. They also were dirt farmers in land that could not produce too well, and they also had strong political differences, but one thing in common was their love for Aquia Church. By four o'clock Sunday most of the Episcopalians had gathered in the churchyard and Mrs. Ralph Powers was ready to play the little reed organ, augmented by Mrs. Clint Powers and her cello. The choir was composed of any willing volunteers who cared to sit near the organ and probably was the reason the congregational singing was much heartier than the usual Episcopalian congregation indulges in. Vestments, aside from the parson's, were unheard of, and on several occasions Sherry forgot to bring his, and it made

little difference in this ancient church where probably his predecessors had, at most, put on a Geneva gown.

Sherry, who had been brought up in Boston and New York, took his rural responsibilities seriously. His second Sunday bothered him when Mr. George Moncure asked him to pray for rain. Without thinking he had exclaimed, "I didn't know anybody ever did!" But Mr. Moncure, smiling kindly, explained that they rather felt farming depended upon God. Sherry felt that he was impelled to go to the next rural work conference.

When Sherry returned, he was full of suggestions for rural life. Why should these farmers, ill equipped to compete with the tremendous wheat ranches of the West, still raise wheat when truck farming would open up Washington, Baltimore, and even New York markets for them? He preached sermons on how to farm, though at that time he had never had a hoe in his hand, and they were charitable about it and overlooked his ignorance and saw his earnest intentions.

In the fall of every year each Episcopal Church is supposed to have an "Every Member Canvass" to raise funds for local, diocesan, and national church support. Just how to go all over a big rural county with trained solicitors puzzled Sherry, and he thought of a nice lazy method. A picnic was arranged and everybody came to the churchyard, where tables were loaded with fried chicken, hams which had hung in a Virginia cellar for at least two years, and lemonade. Then when everybody was full of food, Sherry made a speech and Sheriff Dick Moncure, the Senior Warden, made a speech and everybody solicited everybody else. The budget was oversubscribed. In later years Sherry said it was the only perfect every-member canvass he had ever seen.

The parishioners let us into their social life. At harvest time big family groups gathered for dinner and sang folk songs. Weddings were remarkable affairs. Florists were unheard of in Stafford County, but if ever any church looked prettier than Aquia after the women had decorated it with the garden and field flowers, we have yet to see it. The ceremony was usually followed by a feast and since many of the couples simply went to their new homes from this affair, a custom of "The Serenade" had been continued that must have come down from Elizabethan times, for then the relatives and neighbors gathered under the window of the bridal chamber with horns, tin pans and anything that made a noise and kept the young couple in anything but quiet for the night.

Quantico, the chief Marine barracks of the East, was situated just north of Stafford County and a new element was introduced and many an Aquia girl has married and gone all over the world. But once a year, if it's possible to get transportation, all good descendants of the Race of the House of Moncure return for "All Day Meeting." Moncures from Maine to California come back. Three services are held in the church and clergymen who are kin are called back to preach appropriate sermons. The tables again are set up in the churchyard and the chickens, hams, cake and lemonade consumed at a tremendous rate.

Sherry was paid a great tribute when we were leaving for Waco. Aquia had been an extra-curricular activity in a way, but a remarkable one, and we had learned about genuine country people and loved them. Mr. Frank Powers called at the Fredericksburg rectory and explained in a shy and sweet way that they would like to keep us just for their own. He knew Texas was calling and with a better stipend, but "the boys," meaning the vestry, were not without political power and if we would stay and live in Stafford, Sherry could also be appointed principal of the high school. The offer was more generous than wise, but it was nice to know that these people had made us "beloved strangers."

Delightful as Aquia Church was, it put the finishing touch on my Sunday.

Sunday in the rectory was a strange day, and it was a long time before I could fall into the new routine without a little quiet rebellion. The memory of Sundays which had been my day was still too fresh. I had always gone to church at eleven o'clock; in our family we did that unquestioningly, but on Sunday afternoons there were dates, which meant there were men who entertained one; and there were whole week ends which were purely for pleasure.

Now it was Sherry's day. He did not openly demand it, and he was not nervous and irritable with the strain of having to put over the show. It was just that there was a certain routine which had to be observed. I never had the courage to break into the routine; it took the baby to do that. Before a surgeon operates, before a preacher preaches, he should have a chance to rest. Charlie had no respect for the rule and he always cried on Saturday night. With an amazing vitality and persistence in one so young, Charlie could cry all Saturday night. The floors were splintery and the house was draughty, but Sherry must sleep and Charlie must be quieted. We walked miles together on Saturday nights, Charlie and I.

The day started with an eight o'clock service of Holy Communion, because this was the high church of the town. I was not high church, and it never occurred to me to go; instead I could rest from the walking. Sunday School was held at nine-thirty, and that is when I bathed Charlie. After that I must persuade him to eat his Cream of Wheat so that I could dress for church. We arrived at the Cream of Wheat stage simultaneously with the end of Sunday School. Then the rectory door bell would begin to ring. The Sunday School children, having nothing better to do, wanted a drink of water, or they wanted to use the telephone, or they wanted

to see the baby. I was not above being harassed by these visitations, but I was supposed to keep my temper. I consistently arrived at the eleven o'clock service during the General Confession.

During those dreadful months when I still thought I could help him to preach, I would sit nervously through the sermon, and then at the luncheon table, I undertook to give what I considered to be good, constructive criticism of the sermon. Sherry stood that as long as he could, and then asked me politely to desist from that particular form of torture just at the time when he was still keyed up by the delivery of the sermon and by the whole effort of conveying to a congregation the excitement and importance of the service.

After Sunday lunch, Sherry went to sleep. This was a physical necessity and the most difficult part of the day for me to accept. Where was my Sunday afternoon date now?

At three o'clock Sherry started out to the country church, and from the time Charlie was six months old, he and I often went too. The colonial church was built for family attendance. The square pews had seats around four sides, and Charlie was not the only infant there, and I was not the only mother who had brought beaten biscuits and a little bottle of orange juice for the baby. Unfortunately, the high backs of the pews had been cut down, and there was not the privacy which they originally had. There was a time when the clergyman could see the inattention of his congregation only when he climbed into the top deck of the threedecker pulpit to preach. If Sherry could not hold the attention of his young son, I took Charlie out into the churchyard. There he played among the tombstones on which were carved names out of Virginia history, and I sat under a weeping willow tree and felt like something out of a steel engraving of my grandmother's more morbid day.

The end of the service at Aquia Church was not the end of Sherry's day. There was an evening service in town. This was his favorite service because he could experiment as much as he pleased. The congregation was made up of the few who would come no matter how adventurous the young clergyman might be. His chief critic was obliged to stay at home and listen for the baby, because Emma always went to church on Sunday night, and so he had the field to himself. He tried many things which he was to keep or reject through the coming years.

At the end of the day, if Sherry was exhausted, it was with the pleasant exhaustion of one who has done what he likes best to do, and what he does well, and I could not really resent giving up Sunday to the preacher.

Sherry was an avid collector. He hoarded letters and timetables and scraps of paper. Although we never traveled anywhere except to Richmond, reading timetables was his favorite pastime. It seemed to give him the same cozy feeling that I got from reading decorators' magazines, and it was about as useless, considering the sad state our finances were always in. I did not like the piles of timetables, but the empty envelopes were worse. They cluttered up the desk we had to share and created a tension between us. I had already discovered the three things a husband and wife should not share, and those three things are a bank account, a clothes closet and a desk. Our bank account was too small to be divided, and therefore it was one of those with the misleading term "joint account"; I knew the prospect for two closets to a rectory bedroom was slim, and we would never have enough money to buy another desk.

"Just these empty envelopes, can't I throw them away?" I asked him when the piles became unwieldy and began to topple over and spill across to my side of the desk.

"Why, Maria! Those are my sermons. You wouldn't throw away my sermons, would you? I might want to publish a book of sermons some day."

All I could see were bewildering hieroglyphics on torn envelopes. In exasperation I said, "I wish, how I wish I could get your office out of the rectory. I will never get the house straight with you in it."

"All right, how would you like to go to Waco, Texas? I am sure there would be a nice parish house there, and I could probably even have a secretary who would treat my papers with respect."

"Where and what is Waco, Texas?" I asked.

"It is a town in Texas—you have heard of Texas? And there is a very fine parish of eight hundred communicants, and I hear I am being considered."

"You have been considered before," I said scathingly, and I forgot all about it.

Two weeks later I was invited to a bridge party, and I wanted to go, but it was Emma's day off. Since I was invited to so few parties—well, maybe Sherry would take care of Charlie. After all, he would not be expected to call on Saturday afternoons. The parishioners could think he was writing a sermon.

When I came home from my bridge party, Sherry was at the door holding a squirming little boy. His tie was askew and his hair was on end, and he was saying good-bye to two gentlemen.

"Maria, you are just in time. I want you to meet these gentlemen who are from Texas."

The gentlemen bowed low.

"Waco, Texas, ma'am, and we hope to see a lot more of you."

The ground rocked beneath my feet, and it was a very

weak invitation which I gave them to come in and stay for supper.

"Your husband has told us where we can find some very fine oysters, ma'am, and we are on our way. Your husband has consented to take a little trip with us," said one of them.

I managed an uncordial good-night, but not before I had caught sight of two suits which were probably not inherently flashy, but I had been living in the midst of a naturally conservative community, increased, I was often told, by post Civil War poverty, and they looked flashy to me. I know I am right in saying that the brims of their hats, while not of the ten-gallon variety, were definitely wider. I hardly waited till they were out of earshot when I turned on Sherry: "You can't have encouraged them! I know you would like a trip to Texas, but it would be immoral to go when of course you wouldn't think of accepting the call."

"It is a very fine church."

"But you can't leave Virginia for Texas, even if you were born in Pittsburgh."

"Don't you ever get tired of the Civil War?" he asked. "Don't you ever get tired of ancestors? Don't you ever get tired of—of—St. George's?"

"Of course I don't get tired of the Civil War and ancestors! Where would I be without them? Anyway, you have nothing to wear. The suits you inherited from Uncle Will are all in holes, and you can't possibly wear the one you have on."

"The chain store is still open for the Saturday night shoppers, and I'll go right down and buy a suit now."

He left me feeling frustrated and a little ill. I gave Charlie his supper and put him to bed, and then I looked for a map of Texas. I was not much cheered by the map. To be sure Texas was not on the Pacific Ocean as I had supposed, but that did not make it any nearer to Richmond.

Then Sherry came home. He was wearing the new suit, and it was bright blue with a yellow pin stripe. It did not fit him anywhere; he has not a chain store figure, but I could see that it made him feel—well, breezy. For me I knew the battle was lost, and I went to bed feeling infinitely depressed.

The committee from Waco was anxious to get out of town. "This town!" said one, "it gives me the willies. There isn't anyone in it under eighty. We sat on the hotel porch all Saturday morning before we called you, and we know there isn't."

"Yessir. We were supposed to listen to you preach on Sunday morning before we called you. But we couldn't keep on sitting on that hotel porch all day, and there wasn't anything else to do. Anyway we figured we could get it over with quicker and start home if we came around and called you Saturday," said the other. "He is a good preacher, isn't he, ma'am?"

I had no idea of encouraging them, and my reply was not enthusiastic. They left for home on Sunday night and Sherry went with them.

Our goldfish bowl suddenly seemed cozy, and I became sad at the thought of leaving it. It made me sad to think of taking Charlie so far away. I could think of nothing pleasanter than having Sherry's office in the rectory and having him right there all day long. I thought of leaving my own family and going to a place I had never heard of, and I packed Charlie's suitcase and mine, and caught the next train for Richmond.

To my chagrin, there they seemed to think Texas would be an exciting adventure. I could not understand it. They had let me down badly. My grandmother and I had a very special feeling for each other. Perhaps that was because I have her name, and of all her forty-seven grandchildren, I am her Maria's Maria, and my daughter would be Maria. Maria is not a name one picks out of thin air, or from a novel. You will only be named Maria if you are one of a long line, and I liked the feeling of continuity it gave me. Now my grandmother was eighty-four years old, and I was going to Texas. I expected her to be exclusively sympathetic with me.

"I wonder if you should go, my dear," she said. Her fine, transparent old hand went out to mine, and there was a smile in her eyes as she said, "'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" I did not know whether her amusement was for me, or for the two of us, provincial Marias that we were. "None of us has ever been west of West Virginia, and perhaps it is time we went. They say that Texas is quite a place."

Before I dried my eyes, we were on the train. How Sherry kept his spirit in the face of my pessimism and my orgy of self-pity, I do not know. He reminded me of how lucky I was to be going to Texas in a stateroom on a pullman train, rather than in a covered wagon, as the Baptists had done, and he made a noble effort to interest me in the railroads over which we traveled. But the wheels of the train ground into my ears the Song of the Homesick Ones:

"By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept:
When we remembered thee, O Sion.
As for our harps, we hanged them up:
Upon the trees that are therein.
For they that led us away captive, required us then a song,
And melody in our heaviness:
Sing us one of the songs of Sion.
How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem:
Let my right hand forget her cunning:
If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the
roof of my mouth:

Yea if I do not prefer Jerusalem above my chief joy."

I looked out at the prairie and at the little towns and wondered which of them was like Waco.

The train pulled into the station and my heart sank. There on the platform was the whole vestry, and they looked anything but cheerful and enthusiastic. With them was a beautiful and beautifully dressed woman who told me that she was Mary Temple, with whom Sherry had stayed on that first flying visit. She steered me through a confusion of introductions and into the back of her car.

"My dear, I have some pretty depressing news for you," she said, and my heart jumped. I had been on the train for forty-eight hours, completely out of touch with the world I had left. Anything might have happened, and for that flash, before her next sentence, I had time to be just plain scared to death. "Your furniture is smashed into kindling wood!" she said. Something happened to me then which affected the rest of my life. I was so relieved that my furniture was kindling that I have minded little what has happened to my furniture from that day to this. I breathed again and thanked her for her sympathy, and I told her quite honestly that it was all right, I did not mind a bit.

"You are to stay with my sister until you can salvage something for your house. I was given this unpleasant assignment, but you are being a grand sport!" I was not being a good sport. It did not seem bad.

Our car turned into a driveway between wrought-iron gates and drew up at the door of a big stone house. The vestry drove up behind us with Sherry and Charlie, and we were all deposited on the doorstep. Our hostess came out and greeted us. She picked Charlie up in her arms as if she really liked little boys.

"Lucy," she said to the colored woman behind her, "here is your child." And then to me, "You didn't mind my engaging Lucy to take care of Charlie while you got settled, did

you? It is a long ride for mothers and babies, isn't it? I know because I have taken it, and Lucy has taken it with me. She is from Virginia too. But come, I'll show you your rooms." I looked gratefully about me at the comfort and luxury of Fan Davis' house. I had not expected Texas to be so substantial. Why, this place seemed actually to have roots.

"Now I have a confession to make," said Fan. "I have asked a few people in to dinner with you tonight. They are all so impatient to meet you, it didn't seem fair to keep you all to ourselves. You have plenty of time to rest now, and you needn't appear again until seven-thirty. If you have an evening dress in your suitcase—but of course you haven't, come down just as you are if you want to. We won't care!"

WACO

5

Which we met all the Episcopalians and most of the dissenters who enjoyed the corrupting association with the Episcopalians. St. Paul's Church was fifty years old, one of the oldest buildings in Waco, and the community was proud of it. The rectors of St. Paul's Church had always enjoyed some prestige in town, and so we were welcomed.

On a February day which was like April in Virginia, we moved into the rectory. Most of our furniture had been salvaged and glued together, and now our household goods were piled on the sidewalk where they looked forlorn and undressed. It could well have been the materialization of the dreadful dream of finding oneself unclothed on the corner of 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue. The Victorian sofa on which Grandmother had sat to receive her Wednesday callers leaned against a hackberry tree, shabby and accusing. On top of it was the baby's chair, the kind with the hole in the seat. I wondered at the human necessity to accumulate things, and the human urge to move about from place to place. We were pagans who clung to household gods with the tenacity of Jacob and Rachel. When we moved to a new country, we must set up our family shrines so that the land would not seem entirely strange. This "lust for travel and longing for home" is probably Nature's system of checks and balances: a move either makes our possessions seem less im-

portant or breaks them up. Two churches have considered this human weakness, and the Methodist clergyman and his family flit from one furnished parsonage to another, and the Roman Catholic Church rules against families and other encumbrances.

In spite of the indignity of a move, I was glad not to be either Methodist or Roman. By this time the stevedores were groaning and sweating under the weight of Sherry's piano, and since I did not want to be there when they were finally flattened under it, I turned my back on it all and went through the house to the kitchen. At the back door I was met by a man in a white raincoat and a fireman's hat. He stood there making gestures as if he were catching flies.

"Hello there, I've come to help you decide where to put the furniture," he said. I thanked him and told him that I would not think of taking his time. He followed me about, and I could hear him muttering to himself: "That's a nice dress, but it oughter be red. Red would look nice on you. I'll get you a red one the next time there's a fire." When I looked at him, he would put his hand over his mouth and snicker. I recognized that I was being helped by the parish half-wit, but that did not make it easier. When I saw Sherry and a young vestryman, Walter Dossett, drive up to the curb, I went running out to meet them, leaving the man in the fireman's hat staring after me, sucking his thumb.

"This man, this dreadful man! Is there any way of getting rid of him?"

"Oh, that's just Henry. He's harmless. His mother was such a saint, we pretty much give Henry his head," said Walter. Then he called to Henry: "Come on Henry, it's time to go to the fire. I'll give you a ride."

Henry got quietly into the car. "See you in church!" Henry called to me as he drove off, and he snickered. I know now

that every parish has a variety of Henry in it, but this was only my second, and he still seemed sinister.

The rectory into which we moved that day had been bought for Sherry's predecessor, his seven children and his invalid wife. It was a frame house which had once been white, but the Texas dust storms had long ago swept the white away. In the front yard were the inevitable hackberry trees. The hackberry has roots near the surface of the ground in order to get any moisture there is; for that reason grass does not grow under hackberry trees. In the back yard were four outbuildings: there was a corn crib, a barn, a garage, and a servants' cabin. The servants' cabin was built on high piles like certain of those African huts one sees in the National Geographic magazine. This was different only in that its roof was shingle and not banana leaves. In the back yard also were some Texas roses, and there is not anything so beautiful as Texas roses. And there was a fig bush; it was not the Virginia variety, which freezes every winter and struggles up again bearing figs the size of marbles; these figs were as big as peaches, and nothing tastes as good as Texas figs except Texas peaches and Texas watermelons.

The rectory itself I should slur over quickly, but it was my biggest problem and discouragement. It was built on piles too. In the living-room and dining-room were golden oak mantels with columns, and mirrors above and shiny green tiles around the opening. The fireplaces were only for ornament and had been blocked up and gas stoves set in front of them. The windows were big sheets of plate glass, "picture windows" they are called, and they framed a Texas street. When I got an estimate on glass curtains and chintz, our salary, which had seemed so large, would not cover the windows. I made one attempt to decorate, and that was in Charlie's room. It had been papered just before we

arrived, and I put ruffled curtains at the windows and a cover on the couch and a picture of George Washington and one of John the Baptist on the wall. Then Charlie, under the influence of Robert Louis Stevenson, learned that his "bed was like a little boat," and that he could steer it around the room and de-paper the walls. As in most Texas houses, the walls were boards covered with a kind of mosquito netting on which the paper was pasted. It was a simple matter for Charlie to make a little hole in the paper and then stick his finger in and pull the paper off in long streamers. This entertained him for hours. I stopped trying to cope with the rectory of the Reverend Doctor who had preceded us, his seven children and his invalid wife. How we hated each other, that rectory and I!

There is a flavor about a place which one can only get when one is a newcomer, let us say in the first two or three months. After a while one settles in and cannot recapture the sense of wonder about this or that. Just as accents lose their strangeness, so does the jargon. Their "Hurry back!" became my "Hurry back!" I cruised around town, and did all my errands without touching the sidewalk. The letter boxes faced the street, and I drove up to the curb, pulled a weight and dropped my letters in the slot; I honked my horn at the drug store and cod liver oil was delivered to my car door; at the market, I waved my shopping list to a clerk waiting on the sidewalk, and he filled my grocery order and brought it out to me. This was something lovely known as curb service. In Richmond the lunch hour is 2 o'clock. In Waco I made a concession and invited guests to come at 1:30. They arrived at 1 and gave me politely to understand that the Waco lunch hour was 12. I changed my lunch hour to 12, and the nurse and the cook became much more cheerful. In the summer, and most of the year was summer, bridge parties started at 8 o'clock in the morning and ended at 11, and you were not supposed to make much effort after that until the sun went down. All these social customs I found were wise and pleasant. But I never ceased to wonder at the nearness of the stars on a Texas prairie, and on the golf links I always stopped in the middle of a swing if a scissortail swallow flew overhead or a horned toad scurried out of the bushes. Waco was an adventure. It was a strange land, but not like the waters of Babylon. It was more like moving from the past into the future. Its faults were the faults of youth rather than the decadence of age.

When I compared the local mores with Richmond, I knew that in nothing was there a greater contrast than in club life. In Richmond one belonged to the Westmoreland or Commonwealth or Country Clubs, while the civic luncheon clubs and Masonic clubs were of minor importance. Now I know that in some cities the Rotary Club carries great social prestige and political power. In Waco, the Shrine Club was everything rolled into one. When Sherry was told that a certain sum of money had been given very anonymously to make him a member of the Shrine, I was horrified. He said that he could not refuse the gift without being stuffy and rude, that he was being offered their best, that belonging to the Shrine was the equivalent of belonging to the best clubs in Richmond, and that his type of ministry depended on his living close to his people.

The word got around that the next Shrine initiation would include the rector of St. Paul's, and men said to him, "It's a great experience! I want to hear your first sermon after you have been through that great experience!" The great experience consisted of a parade of initiates through the streets with Sherry perched on a beer wagon in a top hat, tail coat, and shorts, being prodded by a man with an electrically charged stick. By this he greatly endeared himself to the community and had the privileges of the fine new

building, with a thick Turkish atmosphere, which housed the Shrine Club.

The effect of the Shrine on the church cropped up unexpectedly in the meetings of the Men's Club. A member of the vestry held a high position in National Shrine circles. He went off to conventions to learn how to torture initiates, and he came back with dribble glasses and rubber coat hooks, electric persecutions, and recipes for sawdust salad and other inedible dishes which were supposed to send a crowd gathered for supper in a parish house off into ecstasies of merriment. When we left Waco, and the Shrine went out of our lives, I found I had lost some security I would never recover. I cannot relax at a church supper, and I bite everything distrustfully.

Waco put on its white gloves and called on the new family in the rectory. Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and Episcopalians all came, and then waited for their calls to be returned.

"I don't like to call because I don't like to break in on people," I said to Mary Temple, who thought she should tell me that I was expected. "They can't really want me to come. When anyone is at home, she is either reading, or sewing, or writing, or painting, or cooking, or cleaning, or entertaining invited guests, or she is asleep, and I think it is wrong to interrupt any of these activities. I don't want to be the one to do it. If you don't interrupt anything else, you interrupt a train of thought."

"And that," said Mary Temple, "is what a great many people want you to do. You can't understand that, can you? I hope you will never need to have your thoughts interrupted. But come, we have no time for this philosophizing. You get dressed for calling, and I will show you how to do it. Most people only expect you to make a gesture. The

trouble with you is that you make a serious effort to see

people.

"You always pick a good, sunny day," she said as we started out. "You check more names off your list on a nice sunny day—obviously." I felt like Alice in the hands of the Red Queen as I breathlessly followed Mary. "You ring the bell and count twenty, and then you put your card under the door." Her husband had been Bishop of North Texas, and I took her word for it. We paid fifteen calls in one afternoon. Those were the only calls I paid in Waco. Without Mary, I did not have the courage to count twenty and walk firmly away from the door without turning back; and I knew that if I turned back, I would get caught and ruin somebody's nice afternoon, or find myself at a party to which I had not been invited.

I thought I knew all there was to know about bishops, but I soon learned that bishops differ as widely from each other as clergy do. There are no rules for the making of them, and there are no rules for getting along with them. A study of the genus might be made from the diaries which each bishop is required to keep, and which are published once a month in his diocesan paper.

Clinton Simon Quin, the Bishop of Texas, is as Irish as his name. He is the cowboy who rides the Texas plains, and he is the shepherd who knows his sheep. He is Father Marquette and Father Massenet, and the Archbishop of Willa Cather. His diocese covers 49,480 square miles.

On our first Sunday night in Waco, he came from Houston to welcome Sherry as the new rector. The church was full of people who had come to greet the Bishop. At the door, as the congregation left the church, he spoke to each one, and called each by name. One mousy little woman held back till the last, and then went up to him and said, "Bishop, I

am thinking of joining Christian Science, but I don't think I should until I renounce my confirmation obligation to you."

"Take it up with God," said the Bishop. "You made it to Him, not me," and he handed her quickly down the steps. He was not one to quip with. Ten years before, at the age of thirty-four, he had been elected bishop co-adjutor. With a youthful enthusiasm that matched the pioneer spirit of Texas, he decided that although the Episcopalians had gotten off to a late start in the Southwest, with hard work they could catch up. He went about reviving moribund churches and adding new life to established, settled parishes, and starting new parishes where they were needed. All his activities were recorded with comments in his diary, which appeared in The Texas Churchman. Woe to the parish that needed new paint, or had not dusted around the altar, or failed to show up when the church bell rang! The diary was a healthy influence. He may have made mistakes of youth and exuberance, but he demanded no more of his clergy than he was willing to give himself.

He filled the diocese with promising young men, and the result was that their diocesan conventions, which were held annually, were full of fireworks from these enthusiasts who were confidently out to reform the world. They were responsible also for a new brand of church entertainment which sometimes shocked the older, conservative Texas Episcopalians. Under a Bishop with less character and moral strength, things could have gone to pieces, but this Bishop knew when to call a halt, and to enforce discipline and order.

We had been there but three months when the diocesan convention was scheduled to meet in Waco. The Texas convention was like nothing which had ever taken place in Virginia. We were told to provide hospitality for three hundred young people of the Service League, one hundred college boys and girls who would confer on the work of the church on the college campuses, and about two hundred and fifty women of the Auxiliary, besides the clergymen and laymen who, in orthodox dioceses, make up the personnel of annual diocesan councils. It sounded impossible.

The Senior Warden of the vestry offered to act as financial chairman, and in two days he had enough money to put everybody up at a hotel, and to feed them for three days. The chairman of entertainment reported that he had arranged for various banquets, and that he had engaged some talent. "Banquets" and "talent" seemed to be taken for granted as a necessary part of the convention, and we had no inclination to question the local customs. Waco was a long way from the artistic centers of either the East or the West. It was thrown back on its own talent, and it created its own art. Choruses flourished, and schools of interpretative dancing were run by young women who could not quite make Broadway and whose productions were less affected by the Ballet Russe than by Hollywood. This was the talent which appeared as the floor show for the banquet which opened the diocesan convention. While the waiters of the new Hotel Hilton were changing from soup to roast, a group of thinly clad females entered and pirouetted about the room. The Bishop rapped on the table, and there was immediate silence, and the dancers came down from their toes.

"I just want to call the attention of the crowd to the Reverend Mr. Harris who has been retired because of bad eyes!" We all turned to poor Harris, and there he was standing on a chair for a better view of the girls. The dancers were followed by a male quartette who, on being encored twice, ran out of church material, and rendered a number popular with the local lodge of Eagles.

"They came back once too often!" said the Bishop.

When the speeches were called for, they were good and entirely relevant. The Bishop held everything in hand, and when the delegates left that convention to go home, they carried with them a feeling that the church was a stimulating thing to belong to.

Waco is a sprawling little city of about 60,000 inhabitants. It has been called The-Town-Around-the-Totem-Pole, because out of the middle of it arises, surprisingly enough, a building twenty-two stories high. If you say to a Texan that you live in Waco, he asks you what floor you live on.

When we lived there, Waco was a one-crop town. If you were not directly in the cotton business, you indirectly derived your salary from it. There is a right and wrong side to every town, and Episcopalians like to live on the right side and control the industry on the wrong side. That is the way it was in Waco. The Episcopalians were good Episcopalians, and they wanted to be generous with their church. Besides that, cotton-mill workers who are left to choose their own religious expression incline to the Church of God at its most primitive. The Episcopalians built a pretty little mission in the mill section with a modern and artistic parish hall. With a day nursery, mothers' clubs, and special parties to celebrate the church festivals, they sought to attract the mill workers.

Walter Dossett went with us to our first party at the mission. The members of St. Paul's Church who crossed the tracks earnestly worked to make the guests feel at ease, and it looked like a successful party. On the way home we drove past a little wooden building of rough boards and traditional church lines. Lights shone through open windows and weird noises streamed out with the light. Walter stopped his car.

"You should know what we are competing with over here,"

he said. "We won't call it snooping, but just glance in there."

Sherry had done some missionary work in the mountains of southwest Virginia in the summer time, and he had seen a Holy Roller orgy before, but I had not. It has been eighteen years since I stood outside that window, but the face of the girl in the pink dress is before me as I write. The men and women on the benches were swaying back and forth. Their eyes were closed. With their hands and feet they beat out a rhythm like the tom-toms in Emperor Jones. The girl in the pink dress was doing an abandoned little up and down jig step in the cleared space in front of the dais. Her eyes were set in a wild stare, her cheeks were flushed, her mouth was open in breathless ecstasy, and she "witnessed" in strange, half-articulated words. We would call it doubletalk now. Her gasping refrain was "Lord Jesus! Come and get me!" The swaying men and women joined her at rhythmic intervals, moaning, "Come, Lord Jesus, come tonight." It was a depraved and compelling sight. I hated to leave before Jesus came. It seemed a sure thing that something would materialize out of all that tension and ecstasy. We were looking at a sight unholy to watch, and we tore ourselves away. After a few minutes of silent driving, when we had shaken off the spell, Walter said, "Can we ever expect them to give up their orgies and be satisfied with being Episcopalians?"

"I guess we can't," said Sherry, "as long as the only mental, moral, emotional and social release in their lives must be supplied by the church."

Sherry was soon engrossed in these people on the wrong side of the tracks. Some social injustice on the part of the owners seemed to him to need correction. The vestry of St. Paul's Church was made up of approachable, sympathetic men, and he was sure that all of them would join him in a campaign for social justice. He went to one of them, Mr.

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Brent, to ask who owned the cotton mill and for help in putting the problem up to the owner.

Richard Brent had built up what we were told was the largest independent cotton business in the world. By the time we reached Waco, Richard had retired to enjoy the proceeds, and he liked to say that he kept his organization going to keep his old employees busy. He took a family pride in the church because of a great uncle who was a bishop, and he graciously welcomed us. At his invitation we visited his office. A clerk on the teletype cabled the Liverpool office and said the rector was calling and wanted to know the weather conditions in Liverpool, and the teletype answered, "Give the rector my compliments and tell him it is raining." The clerk called the Bremen office, and the Bremen office typed off a story about a traveling salesman and a farmer's daughter and the clerk cut it off before the end. It all looked big and important, and we thought our parishioners were the people who ran the world.

Richard Brent, who knew everybody and everything, was the man to see about the cotton mill. Sherry visited him with great confidence. He told Mr. Brent that the wages in the factory were terrible, and that because the factory was beyond the city limits and the sanitary laws of the city did not affect workers, the physical conditions were worse. He said that St. Paul's Church was actually subsidizing the mill, because it cared for the children of the underpaid mill workers in the day nursery.

Richard Brent had a good poker face, his business had required it, and while he sat there, seeming to agree, Sherry became more and more eloquent. Mr. Brent broke in and asked if it was not a good thing to bring the factory down from New England. He said that before the factories came, Waco was just a cotton traders' town. Also he asked if it was not logical to have the factory near the product. Sherry set

him straight on that by telling him that the only reason selfish owners left New England was to get slave labor in the South. Richard Brent promised to give Sherry the information he wanted and the interview ended.

A few nights later the manager of the mill dropped in at the rectory, bringing some unexpected information. Mr. Brent, he said, was the largest stockholder in the business, and Mr. Brent had called the manager and demanded to know why poor whites were being exploited. We learned a lesson in competition, and the troubles of management, and the evils behind evils. The troubles went deeper than the paying of starvation wages to country yokels on the edge of Waco. The eager, idealistic liberalism with which the young clergyman was going to reform the world received its first jolt.

Perhaps Richard Brent was touched by the innocent young rector who faced a bigger problem than he knew, and perhaps he recognized in his heart the justice of the criticism. However it was, he did not resent it, and he had many talks with Sherry on how to help mothers to be mothers and not just mill hands on a pittance. If we had stayed in Waco, there might have been a big run-in with Richard Brent. It is true enough that in our relations with people on both sides of the track, we have found most of the industrialists who are tied up with our unfair economic system just a little ashamed of the things that are done. Not all the owning class want to be exploiters; they would like to believe in the God of Jesus Christ, but the practical god they meet in business is someone else.

It is hard for a clergyman not to feel that he must reform something. A reform is a symbol of his influence, an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. The trouble is that Baptists like to reform things one way, and Episcopalians want to reform them another. The Baptists ran Waco

with some backing from the Methodists, and they did not allow the playgrounds to be used on Sunday. This they considered highly moral: it was keeping holy the Sabbath day. From Sherry's point of view it was highly immoral, and he felt moved to try to change the rule. He visited a city councilman and asked him to have the playgrounds opened. The city councilman said that he would not think of such a thing; the suggestion would stir more opposition than he could cope with.

"If I were a Baptist minister, you would listen to me, wouldn't you?" said Sherry.

"Yes," said the councilman. "If you were a Baptist minister and you disapproved of me, you would preach sermons against me, and politically I would be a dead duck. A Baptist minister would get his congregation so worked up about the evils of playing in public places on Sunday, they would be patrolling the playgrounds. When the Episcopalians get some political influence, you come back, and we'll see what can be done about playgrounds."

The playgrounds were not opened while we were there. Moral indignation can be worked up into a blood lust, and we moved to Waco on the heels of a lynching. This thing was occurring through the South in the twenties more often than we liked to think. Such tragic demonstrations of degeneracy leave a community in an unhealthy frame of mind. In Waco there was a nucleus of citizens who were valiantly trying to improve racial feeling. As always there was the lag between the intellectual leaders, who had no idea of how to rouse a rabble to their own level, and the lower wage groups who saw in a free Negro population a threat to their own economic security. The result was that the Negroes carried chips on their shoulders and there was tension.

We found this tension in our personal relations with the race. I had never known an insolent colored person in Vir-

ginia, but I cannot say why that was. It might have been for some sociological reason; it might have been because my mother had always stood between us and her staff of servants, and also because she knew how to choose them. Now I had an insolent cook, and in my youthful inexperience she terrified me. I could not face her with either directions or corrections, and I communicated with her entirely by notes, which ranged between threats and supplication, such as "So you took the money out of the baby's mite box. Return it or else-" and "Please don't put the pots and pans away unwashed." Her name was Lily, and the only decent thing about her was her love for Charlie. I could not fire her for several reasons: first, this adoration for Charlie in spite of the fact that she robbed his mite box, second, I did not know how to fire her, and third, I did not know how to cook. After a while the situation took care of itself, Lily left.

Charlie's nurse was a primitive young woman, who entertained him by throwing rocks at birds and killing them, and by having him on the curb to wave to every ambulance and "far wagon" that went by. One day she came to work late, and she was shaking with fear. She had seen knives pulled on the street car. When she could speak articulately, she told me that a white man had sat down in the colored section of the car, and the colored occupants had told him politely to move. The car would soon be crowded, and they felt that they had a right to all the "Jim Crow" seats. The white man would not move, the argument became heated, and knives flashed. From her garbled and excited version, I do not know how the riot was averted except by the grace of God.

Sylvester was the sexton at church, and a better-natured sexton we never had, but he also was nervous. Most Episcopal churches are open all day and people come in for medi-

tation and prayer, sometimes bringing a great tragedy with them.

One day Sylvester came to Sherry with an alarming description of a woman weeping and sobbing in a pew. "Mr. Sheerin, you better come and do something quick," he said. "If that woman do like I think she goin' do an' kill herself, you goin' fin' this nigger in Shrevepote. They done take the wrong nigger aroun' here befo' this."

Sherry told him he was very foolish. He went in to see the woman and asked her if he could help. He recognized her as someone who had been in church infrequently. She assured him that there was nothing, and she left. Two days later, she was being taken to a hospital and killed herself by jumping out of the ambulance, and Sylvester brought the newspaper to Sherry triumphantly, "See what I done tol' you. A nigger cain't be too careful."

This was the spirit which the high-minded leaders of the town were trying to readjust.

All this time the work of the church was growing. Sherry, being young and strong, was inclined to scorn the idea of an assistant, but areas of neglect began to show themselves. Bishop Quin suggested that a deacon, who was graduating from the Berkeley Divinity School that spring, should be added to the staff.

There is no rule for bishops, and there is no rule for assistants, or curates. Sherry's first assistant, the young deacon fresh from the seminary, became his tutor. Ed Mullen, a stocky young man, with keen eyes twinkling behind his glasses, had gone to the first of the Episcopal theological schools to experiment in clinical training. The Virginia Seminary taught homiletics, New and Old Testament exegesis, and history, and pastoral theology, but how to deal with a

soul clinically was never mentioned. Pastoral theology was usually a series of lectures by some good clergyman with many years of experience behind him, on how to conduct a funeral and when and how to call. "When you call," said one visiting lecturer of advanced years, "be sure to take off vour rubbers and overcoat, and place your umbrella in the corner-then no matter how short a time you stay, it will look like a long call." A practical suggestion, but it gave no clue to the treatment of a parishioner in distress, or how to deal with the many psychological problems. A little reading, a few college courses in psychology were a bare beginning, and Sherry felt his lack of internship. Ed Mullen knew nothing about a Sunday School, and he could not even drive the pastoral Ford, but he had worked in two mental hospitals. He lived at the rectory, and he had brought his library with him. He gave Sherry lessons in practical theology and in the art of the confessional.

Ed made other contributions to the education of the rector. Sherry was proud of his Irish Episcopal heritage, and he was a militant member of the low church party. When he looked under his bed at night, we had great arguments about it. He said he was only looking for his bedroom slippers, but I was sure he was looking for an Anglo-Catholic. I was ignorant on points of churchmanship, but fortunately I had only been exposed to the Virginia brand, which is low indeed. An amusing crisis arose in Waco on one of the early visits of the Bishop to St. Paul's Church when he was to celebrate Communion. There were no eucharistic candles, and he lighted one of the vesper candles on each side of the altar. Sherry invoked the spirit of the Reverend Frank Page of Virginia, the founder of St. Paul's Church, and blew the candles out. When Irishmen meet, they either laugh or cry; these Irishmen laughed.

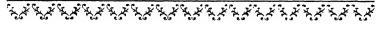
Now here was Ed Mullen, and Ed was more than a little tinged by the catholic revival. Sherry thought Anglo-Catholics were obliged to be effeminate because they were so interested in decoration and in the fancy robes they wore, and in having the smell of incense around them. Ed was not effeminate. He was a real man, and an intelligent one. He convinced Sherry that unless the low churchman revived his theology and became less careless in his liturgics, he might as well be a Rotarian. Sherry did not change his churchmanship under Ed, but he changed his attitude toward the opposition, and he gave up wearing bedroom slippers.

Ed's fiancée was coming down from New England to marry him in Waco, and Sherry risked his own life teaching Ed to drive the Ford so that they could take their wedding trip in the car. When she arrived, Ed drove proudly to the station to meet her, and the Lord being with them, he brought her safely to the rectory.

Ed had his own ideas on how a wedding should be performed, and he insisted that Sherry should conform to them. He said that wedding music could be beautiful without being trite, and he would have none of Wagner or Mendelssohn. He had Sherry follow the thirteenth-century custom of meeting the bride at the door of the church, as if she were a corpse. When it was all over, we admitted that it had been an impressive ceremony. The Woman's Auxiliary arranged a wedding luncheon at the hotel, and the parish presented the young couple with a silver bowl and pitcher. They got happily into the Ford and careened off down the street, missing a truck by inches, and Sherry went back into the church and said a prayer to St. Christopher.

Ed thought one should be adventurous with services of worship, and that special occasions should be special and

not just repetitions of morning prayer, or even of Holy Communion. A modern ministry required something more than a prayer book and a gracious personality. When Ed went off to be a missionary to the Philippines, Sherry lost his first assistant and his instructor in pastoral psychology.



RICHMOND

6

The LEFT Waco too soon. We might have remained there a long time by nomadic clerical standards, had it not been for a gravitational pull which could not be denied, and which drew me back to Richmond for the birth of my second child. It is easy to become a Texan, and it would be pleasant and comfortable; but to do so, one should burn all the emotional bridges to the East. This I was not prepared to do.

The Williams family is an ordinary one as the name implies, but like the giant Antaeus who was invincible as long as he remained in contact with the earth, we have always discovered the confidence of lions from contact with a special bit of Virginia soil. We return often to the long and unimpressive house and to the particular ground which is the source of our strength. We know that there is a welcome for us, and that no matter how we may be devalued by the world, there we still count, and there we will be restored. The postman, the milkman, the garage man and many delivery boys, who have grown old on the route, have watched the family grow up and go away and come back to be made strong again. For years the milkman has stopped to drink a cup of coffee with the cook. "I see the fleet's in," he says to her when our cars with license plates from five states are drawn up in front of the house. As the years have passed it has never occurred to us not to return when we please, with wives, husbands and children, and we bring our cooks to learn from Julia. With each person comes a different opinion. on every subject. No matter with what violence we disagree, we have loyalty to, and pleasure in, each other. Since the day when Sherry, the first clergyman, came to "Sunny Crest," two brothers and my sister have gone out to rectories, giving direction to an already emphatic group. When the bright fire is lighted in the library, we will be at our favorite pastime, which is our endless discussions with each other.

In the morning my father, who might be justified in slowing to a more comfortable pace, goes running down the stairs to set the world to rights. Before he starts the day, before even he has his well-made coffee, he has family prayers. There was a low ebb in the prayer life of the family when his group consisted of the butler on one window seat, and my father, with his Bible, on the other, and the dogs curled at his feet.

When my father has money, he buys paintings of the traditional school, and first editions, and adds a room to the house. When there is no money, the house becomes quite shabby. There is no talent in the family for puttering around and making the most simple repairs. The only talent is for sitting in the library and reading and being oblivious to leaks and cracks. Once when a leg came off the back of a sofa, we all applauded the ingenuity of John, back from teaching at Groton, and bored with Yankee efficiency. He thought of putting a log of wood in place of the broken leg. The sofa was just as comfortable, and except for the maid who cleaned around it, no one remembered the log again for years.

Six sons and two daughters are scattered abroad, and they know where the center of the universe is. They want to share this knowledge with their new friends, and the result is quite a stream of visitors. My father and mother have taken rapidly-changing fortunes and house guests with equal grace and graciousness. I do not know what the house guests think; strange things have happened to them, and entertainment is necessarily informal and casual. Parties are never carefully planned; they accumulate too rapidly. Butlers and chauffeurs have come in good days, and gone in bad—finally, quite finally, but my mother and her staff of Julia and Ruth and Susie can and will handle anything. The term "social relations" has become an important one in the working vocabulary of the clergy. It carries broad implications of our responsibility to our fellow man, but it is hard for me to dissociate the term from the picture I have of Mother, and the three efficient colored women, who have an aggregate of more than fifty years with the family, discussing their preparations for "company."

To start housekeeping in a rectory, and to find that hospitality costs money was an unpleasant awakening. It seemed a desecration of a Christian art to have to fit hospitality into a budget. This was another fact of life I would never have learned from my mother.

All this is the reason we left Waco in slightly less than two years, when Sherry was called to be rector of Grace and Holy Trinity Church in Richmond. I had left Waco one hot July to have Maria born in Richmond. Nothing else seemed possible. Now I know that leaving Sherry to have each of the three children born in Richmond was cheating him pretty badly of a responsibility which he would have welcomed and for which he would have been more than adequate. Except that Sherry remembers Antaeus, he would never forgive me. However wrong it was, Maria was born in Richmond, and Sherry accepted the call, which came at a strategic moment, to Grace and Holy Trinity Church.

There was no rectory for us because the vestry suggested that, since the rector emeritus had lived in the rectory for a long time, it would be rather a shame to move him now, so

near the end of his life. Would we mind, they asked, taking a house allowance instead of a rectory? I was more than pleased with their suggestion. I thought I was through forever with rectories which did not fit, and with wallpaper which was nice and inoffensive and would make a good background for anything. I could come back to Richmond and be just like my friends who had married Richmond men and settled down to duplicate their mothers. Between Sundays I would forget that there were supposed to be any special obligations on a clergyman's wife. In Waco the church was beginning to emerge for me as a center of activity, but we had not stayed long enough. My mother could run woman's auxiliaries, but I would make my contribution to good works in the more congenial atmosphere of the Junior League. I had never been interested in the organizations of the church when I lived in Richmond, and it would be affectation now. I had never paid calls in Richmond, and no one would expect me suddenly to go calling. I could neither improve nor hurt my standing in the community. In Richmond you are born into your standing and from that moment on there is nothing you can do about it. It is like the Presbyterian doctrine of the elect. If you have not got it, you cannot get it, and if you have it, you cannot lose it. When a stranger moves to town, he remains a stranger. Richmond can sometimes forgive, but they can never forget an outland background. Sherry's mother was born in Ohio, and his father was born in Ireland, and Ireland was more familiar than Ohio. As for me, I drew a long breath and relaxed; I was at home. Sometimes when I went to parties, I lingered in the upstairs hall a little longer than necessary just to listen to the voices of my mother and my aunts and my friends and theirs as they blended into a symphony which I would never have heard if I had not gone away to a strange land. And at church they sang about the "God Incvarnate.

man divine," and they asked God to "gyard and gyide the workers in the field," and nobody has ever given any explanation for why they stick those y's in here and there. Texas had been good, but getting home was better.

I could not even be affected by our predecessor, even if he was going to live near us as rector emeritus. The wife of our predecessor was a fragile little woman, preoccupied with heavy responsibilities at home, and so I was lucky again in inheriting a congregation which expected nothing from the rector's wife.

But I underestimated the power of our predecessor. The Reverend Doctor Burkhardt was a man who did not wrap his talent in a napkin: he was a rare pastor. He was an uncomplicated pastor. There were no temptations which pulled him this way and that. He never wondered if he should put more time on his preaching, and perhaps become a great preacher, or on the confessional and clinical work, or on theology, or social work, or on community movements. He knew where his gift lay, and he pursued an undeviating course. He called incessantly and sympathetically, and he carried a Bible in his pocket. He met every crisis in the life of each parishioner with a prayer, and he had a list of shutins to whom he telephoned at night and said a prayer with them on the phone. He was a single-minded and well-loved clergyman, and a difficult one to succeed.

This should have given us a chance to estimate the effectiveness of a purely pastoral ministry, but the situation was unique in that Grace Church and Holy Trinity Church had, four years before we came, formed a successful combination. The site of Grace Church had become impossible, and after the necessary preliminary arrangements, its congregation with its rector at the head, marched up and joined the congregation of Holy Trinity Church in its over-large church building on Monroe Park. The rectors of the two churches

were joint rectors of the congregation. Very soon after the combination, the rector of Holy Trinity Church died, leaving Dr. Burkhardt in command. Thus Holy Trinity kept its plant, and Grace kept its rector. Now the Episcopal clergymen have a record for short tenure of parish which beats the Methodist, and the Sheerins have not helped this record any. But when a clergyman finally attains a rectorship in Richmond, there is nothing higher for him to look forward to, and, unless he is a foreigner and was born in Pittsburgh, he stavs. Only a very few foreigners are called to Richmond churches. Dr. Burkhardt was certainly no fly-by-night. He had been rector of Grace Church for so many years that he had a place for himself in the hearts of all the church people of Richmond for his gentle Christianity and also for his heroic work during the influenza epidemic of 1918. When I say that Grace Church kept its rector, I mean that it kept something that was as much a part of its emotional life as a church building gets to be.

By the time Sherry was called to be the first new rector of the combined churches, the lines, as far as I could see, had been completely obliterated. The combination had acted like a shot in the arm. These conservative parishes had taken one big, adventurous step; they would continue to take big adventurous steps. The women of the church were the first in town to abandon the ancient custom of many little societies, each with its one small church project for which it struggled alone, and which blotted out all the other phases of the work of the church. It adopted the new idea of all the women of the church being educated in all the work of the church. From now on, no one woman could see only the linoleum on the floor of the church kitchen, while another woman was pleased to walk on rotting boards with her eyes on China. She who enjoyed working for linoleum would be put on the linoleum committee, but she would know about

China. This was the new and efficient system of church work which was put into effect.

And they called a rector who was born in Pittsburgh.

Sherry tried valiantly to do his pastoral duty, but there were many other things to do, and so little time. I became inclined to shut people off rudely when they wanted to tell me about the virtues of Dr. Burkhardt. On a day when I went into the church office, I found one of the parish's most demanding social service cases sitting there. She was in a bad temper. As soon as she saw me her face became flushed and fierce, and she shook her finger at me and said, "Mr. Sheerin ain't one bit as good as Dr. Burkhardt was. Here my daughter has all this trouble and he ain't never been to see her yet!"

"No," I said in exasperation. "Of course Dr. Burkhardt called on your daughter every day. I know all about it. I have heard all this before."

"Don't you imply nothing about my daughter and Dr. Burkhardt!" she screamed at me. "She ain't any more of a slut than you are!" She rose up out of her chair and came toward me menacingly.

"I didn't mean—I only said . . ." I stammered weakly as I backed quickly out of the door. When I was on the sidewalk and the heavy oak door of the church was shut between us, I leaned against it and did not know whether to laugh or cry. I had come near to precipitating a brawl in the church office.

We had left Henry, the natural, in his fireman's hat, behind in Waco, but it was not long before I discovered his unfortunate counterpart in Richmond. Our first Easter was warm and lovely. I had seen the Texas desert bloom and become carpeted with lupine and Indian paint brush and poppies and gaillardia, every color of the rainbow, and even

the vacant lots in the little towns flamed with the beauty of Texas wild flowers. But when April comes I want to be in Richmond. On this April day, lilacs and wisteria, spirea and tulips were blooming in every front yard and garden. The church was banked with palms and lilies, and people were singing joyfully, "Welcome, Happy Morning! Age to age shall say!" "Such nice people," I thought to myself, and I was proud to bring Sherry back to them. I came out of the service feeling uplifted.

In the vestibule of the church, I was brought out of my cloud by the feeling of a clawlike hand closing over mine. A tall, pale woman, with too much heavy auburn hair and a strange smile, drew me away from the crowd and into a corner. She put a flower pot into my hands.

"It's a poinsettia," she said, "for you," and she stopped and waited for me to say something. I looked down at the flower pot and there was nothing to say; there was nothing in the pot except three tall, bare stems sticking up in hard gray dirt. "If you take good care of it like I have done, it will grow some leaves. Keep it behind the door and pour milk on it." She stopped again and peered at me and waited. "Don't you like it? I want you to have it because Mr. Sheerin has been so good to me. He is such a gentleman. Last Easter I was a Presbyterian, but the preacher called me into his office and—" Here she had the grace to put her lips close to my ear while she said something quite obscene. "He was no gentleman!" At that she slowly shook her head and clicked her tongue. "The Easter before that I was a Baptist, but the preacher called me into his office and-" She put her lips to my ear and whispered again. "I must go now. You must tell me when the leaves come out. Remember-milk!"

I do not know what I did with the flower pot; I was too busy thinking of Henry. This woman was different and more sinister; she would not go quietly off to fires in a white raincoat and a fireman's hat. I was sure Sherry already had her filed neatly in the card index under "wish fulfillment fantasy," but I hoped she would soon become a Roman Catholic.

These were the depression years, and the church was beginning to face new crises. The three tensions, economic, racial and international, were undeniably growing. A clergyman could not go on preaching sweetness and light and the hope of evolving into ultimate perfection in the face of that blackness, and still keep his conscience clear. The problem of reconciling Darwin and the Bible was painless compared to reconciling the liberal, Utopian theology with the sin and evil of the world. Things were certainly not getting better and better.

Nineteen thirty-two was the year of the Hunger Marchers, and Richmond was on the highway to Washington. The newspapers played up the situation until we expected something after the manner of Wat Tyler's Rebellion, and peasants armed with clubs and stones. These Marchers had started in Louisiana, and their numbers grew with each town they passed through. They were travelling mostly in trucks. As they approached Richmond, we heard rumors of their great size and strength. The community committees met to consider whether the Marchers should be welcomed with the full force of the police. Since they had already shown themselves adept at making capital of persecution, that did not seem to be a good answer. Sherry suggested that instead, they should be given a pleasant reception, and that suggestion, of course, got him the chairmanship of a committee to look into ways and means of finding a hall for them to meet in, and a place for them to sleep and food for their brief sojourn. He went to his rich and conservative parishioners,

and was so persuasive that vested interests underwrote the entertainment of the dreaded "communists."

On the night of their arrival, we attended a meeting of the Hunger Marchers in the hall provided by the conservative parishioners. We were conspicuous because we were white, and southern Hunger Marchers were ninety percent Negro. The hall was overheated and reeked with the healthy sweat of a long march. The audience was well-fed and drowsy. A woman with a nursing baby at her breast relaxed beside me. A large, earnest Negro on the platform tried hard to whip the audience up to indignation and rebellion again. He described the food on the rich man's table. "Ummm-m-m!" was the response from the audience. He described their own poverty and degradation. "Ain't it so!" they droned. That night they did not want to be disturbed. The next morning they went quietly off to Washington.

Norman Thomas came to Richmond often during those days, and on many occasions I found myself literally sitting at his feet. There was a chance that he might get at the root of the trouble, and we listened to him intently. He was not interested in us, and he said so.

"You people of the teaching and preaching professions have never known what it is like to be without the bare necessities of life. You don't know what these people are striving for. Social justice is just an academic term for you. You are really waiting for some fate by which you will be absorbed into the capitalistic class. You are no help to me." Since Mr. Thomas himself had been a clergyman in the Presbyterian Church, this did not seem entirely fair. When I voted the Socialist ticket in 1932, my father's rage lasted for a week, an unprecedented length of time.

The hardest problem then, as it is now, was the racial problem. Just before we came to Richmond, the Rosenwald Foundation and the St. Andrew's Association, which was a

local fund, had made a survey of the Negro in Richmond and published their findings in a volume which made bitter reading for the comfortable white citizens of the town. The report told us that approximately one-third of the population of Richmond was Negro. While the best people protested that they loved the Negro, the best people knew only their house servants and did not see the unrest which was beginning. And the best people were no more prominent in the city government of Richmond than best people are in any other city. The Negro was not considered in civic matters; he could not hold any job for the city from scavenger on up. Negroes could not use public parks, and there was only one playground for Negro children, and no gymnasium. Forty percent of the Negroes used Negro physicians, but these physicians could neither practice at a hospital, nor were clinical facilities open to them. The incidence of disease was appalling, with tuberculosis and venereal disease at the top of the list. The report high-lighted for us the inconsistencies of our relationship with the race. We did not like to go into their homes. They were pushed into ghettoes, and they got none of the help and encouragement they needed to achieve pleasanter and more healthful living conditions, and the result was the communicable diseases. Paradoxically, we enticed them into our homes and we put our lives into their hands, and we put our infants into their arms.

Like many another unpopular survey report, this one might easily have been pigeonholed and forgotten, but the energetic director of the community fund saw an opportunity to widen the social vision of the citizens, and conceived the idea of a Negro Welfare Council, whose task would be to try to correct the conditions described in the report. The Negro leaders asked that the chairman of the new committee be a minister, and there were some energetic strangers in town who thought that he should be

someone who was at least educated in the North, and of course for the old families, he should be someone connected with them. Sherry was almost the only person who filled all of the requirements, and he was anything but happy when the job was offered to him. He knew that his northern birth and training would handicap him with the criticism, "he just doesn't understand."

Constructive discussion of the race question was difficult. The people whom we knew retired behind such comfortable sentences as:

"You are making this thing worse by talking about it. Just ignore it and everything will come right. Mammy knows I love her."

"Roscoe was raised right in our backyard, and we were inseparable. If he has to choose between his white friends, who have always done so much for him, and a lot of nigger hoodlums, he will side with us."

"The niggers don't want anything different. Go home and ask your cook if she wants to go to parties with white folks. What do you think she will say? It's just agitators who are starting this thing."

"They can't take an education if you give it to them. Where would they be without the white man? Just answer me that! They don't care whether they have nice bathrooms or not. Give them a nice little house and before you know it, they will tear it down for firewood."

"You are from the North, and this is our problem. You will never understand our colored people, and you had better not mix in."

Sherry's religion was based on the necessity for mixing in, and he accepted the job. Uncle Tom made a point of telling me that the young man I had married was going too far, and that he could not understand the Negro, and I must tell him to get busy about something else. I did not tell him

to get busy about something else; instead I was intensely sorry for the people who were so afraid to look at the situation. The colored people were our cousins in more ways than one, and conditions had not been initiated by them. Had any one of them come to this country of his own volition? To quote one of their leaders, "We received a very pressing invitation—."

I had married a profession that stood for a hard thing to accept, the equal importance of all men in the sight of God. We had planted our feet firmly on a race and gloated in our superiority and great goodness. It was a struggle to keep a balanced approach to the subject. Christian justice must be done, and the sentimentalists who would have us on terms of close social relationship with all the Negroes whom we knew were unrealistic. There were many white neighbors we did not care to invite to dinner. The Negro has a right to the same standards which are imposed on the white race.

The Negro Welfare Council commenced to function and Sherry was its chairman. It was composed half of white and half of Negro members. Sub-committees were appointed to study the various sections of the report. The easier problems connected with recreation could constitute the first steps, while the deeper emotional and economic ones would be attempted after some minor goals had been won. A freshair camp for children in the country, for which there was never anything but approval, was the first accomplishment. A large gymnasium and recreation building in the Jackson Ward district, which holds the city's densest Negro population, required a campaign. This was the easiest financial campaign we were ever involved in. In the heat of July, a campaign that had been set for two weeks was "over the top" in four days. Things seemed to be humming.

The next project seemed innocuous enough, and the committee members were taken by surprise when emotions

blazed up at them. In the headquarters of the Richmond Community Fund, there were maps with pins in them. The pins represented juvenile delinquency, and the spots showed blackest where there were no playgrounds. A playground in the crowded Negro district was a clearly indicated necessity. There was a well-equipped playground that had been built for white children but which was not being used because white children no longer lived in the neighborhood. This the Negro Welfare Council asked the city fathers to turn over for Negro use. Within twenty-four hours of the announcement, the telephone at our house began to ring incessantly. People who had never thought about the Negro problem one way or another were protesting. Some of the calls were anonymous and endeavored to be insulting. Some tried to appeal to sentiment. All demanded that the project be dropped. And all because the playground bordered on the Confederate section of Richmond's aristocratic Hollywood Cemetery! The happy cries of Negro children were a desecration to dead Confederate veterans, and the Negro children must be moved. It turned out that the United Daughters of the Confederacy had gotten busy and organized a pressure group, and Sherry, as chairman of the committee, was their target. The white members of the Negro Welfare Council were young men and women from the best families, graduates of the University of Virginia and other southern institutions, but they took their stand against the United Daughters of the Confederacy and their friends and they patiently attended meeting after meeting. Against the protests, it was decided to experiment for a period to see if any harm came. Since vandalism from a supervised playground is less likely than in a district where there is no supervision, it was a reasonably safe experiment. There are probably few people today who remember that there was a controversy over the playground.

Other battles were not so successful. In our time Negro physicians did not enter the hospitals, but another compromise was effected in that a clinic was established where Negro physicians could be brought up to date on the latest medical techniques without taking a long and expensive trip to some far-off city. The Negroes themselves objected to a separate park; this was too Jim Crow for intelligent Negro leaders. The city fathers did not take on Negro employees, but in spite of the tension of later days, there is a feeling that race relations in Richmond are on a better basis than in most American cities, and some of us feel that the continuing Negro Welfare Council is an important factor in this relationship.

While Sherry was dealing with the Negro leaders, my cook was being conjured. Aydell was a Negro with the long thin hands, and mannerisms and the apparent hopelessness and helplessness of the movie actress, ZaSu Pitts. Because she was poignantly appealing I could not discharge her although in her unhappiness she broke a lot of china. She and Herman, her husband, lived with Herman's mother and that had created a triangle. One day Aydell came to me weeping bitterly and told me that her worst fears had been realized: she was being conjured. She knew it. She had found the fatal white powder in the corners of her room. I suggested the obvious solution that she leave Herman and his mother, and I invited her to move into the rectory and share the room with the nurse. She assured me that once the conjuring process had started, nothing could break the evil spell.

Sherry and I discussed the situation and decided that the civilized thing to do was to refer the case to the Domestic Relations Court. The Court assigned one of its staff to investigate, but the report that was turned in to us after the investigation was anything but reassuring. Herman was in

fact being torn between his wife and his mother, and his mother had the upper hand because she was what is known among her race as a "Conjure Woman." According to the report we could expect one of two solutions to the desperate situation: either Aydell would go crazy, or they would all kill each other as thoroughly as in a Greek tragedy. Fortunately the dénouement was happier when it came. Herman extricated himself and went to Pittsburgh, and Aydell left us and went to work for the Judge of the Domestic Relations Court.

Over Europe there was a cloud a little bigger than a man's hand, but it was still small enough and far away enough for us to believe that the church could decide between war and peace. We had a stake in peace because we had Charlie, and there were many theories on how to raise little boys for peace:

"If you do not give children toy soldiers and pop guns, they will not clamor for war when they grow up."

"If we keep our armed services to a minimum, we will never be tempted to go to war."

"Prepare for war and you will have war; do not prepare for war and you will have peace."

It sounded logical. It was so well-meaning. What a pity it was proved so wrong! I shall never be ashamed of being a pacifist. I am ashamed of the only strategy which was advanced to promote peace.

Arguments in the library at "Sunny Crest" were endless. At night when we gathered before the fire, someone would go to the pantry for a tray of cheese and crackers. In that pleasant place, trouble was academic, and we had to admit the justice of Norman Thomas's indictment.

Between 1930 and 1935 the Oxford Group Movement had its most conspicuous growth. It never failed to be a provoca-

tive subject. Sherry found it too often naïve, and his sense of humor and an unexpected reserve kept him from joining it. The Movement fascinated me, but it did not tempt me. I liked it chiefly because it seemed so far removed from three maudlin, pious books, The Little Episcopalian, Bessie Melville, and Stepping Heavenward, which my grandmother insisted that I read on Sunday when I was a little girl. Since Grandmother's religious suggestions always carried an implication of disaster if I did not conform, I read them, and they made the whole subject of spiritual growth revolting to me. Also at her instigation, I became familiar with Dante and Doré and Foster's Bible Stories. My religious education inclined me to believe that there was not a nickel's worth of choice between good and evil. I gagged at the thought of really being converted. The Oxford Groupers had something there. They were converted in tuxedos and evening dresses, and they confessed and shared and witnessed in hotel ballrooms, and there was a lilt to it. They were matter-of-fact at the same time, and their voices did not change when they brought up the subject of God. They talked about Him without any apologetic preliminaries. "The subject of God is the most important in the world. Just how do you stand on it?" they would ask.

They advocated a quiet time early in the morning, during which you adjusted yourself to God for the day. We experimented with the quiet time, only to find that Sherry and I could not have it on the same morning. One of us had to see that Maria and Charlie were washed and dressed and ready for school. It was hard for me to be sure that I had gotten orders for the day from God. By the time I said my prayers and read the Bible, I felt so pious that anything I did seemed right until results showed otherwise.

In those first years of the Group, it was sensational and exhibitionist, but there was good in it, and Sherry invoked

that good on many occasions in his pastoral counselling. On one occasion, he called on the Group, itself. That was with one of his Richmond parishioners, Allison Dodge. Allison was a spoiled daughter of the rich. We knew her when she was bored with the world and was directing her irritation toward her long-suffering husband. He, poor dear, tried in every way to please her, but nothing would do. Small cities take an interest in their friends and neighbors, and so in this case the community had taken sides, and all those who met at dinner parties and cocktails or for bridge and golf were involved. Thinking to leave behind her the storm which she had stirred up, Allison went to New York, but with her she took her nerves and her emotions and a flickering of conscience. From her room in a New York hotel, she telephoned to Sherry, and she was in an overwrought condition. "It's no use," she said. "I have made a mess of my life, and of Bill's life, and I cannot go on. I am going to jump out of the window-I wanted you to understand; I am thinking of Bill at last."

Such a threat when it is articulate is often an empty one, but a clergyman has to take it seriously. He could not reach out from his church office in Richmond and pull her away from the window. He thought quickly over the resources he could call on in New York. There were churches which specialized in preaching, or music, or liturgy, or social service, but there was one church which specialized in pastoral counselling and assistance. This church was Calvary Church on Gramercy Park, which was the headquarters of the Oxford Group. Sherry put in a long distance call to the Reverend Samuel Shoemaker, rector of Calvary Church, and described his predicament. Immediately someone was sent to Allison. The rector sent a woman who would speak Allison's language, who had the same cultural background,

and who could understand her emotions, and Allison was brought through her crisis.

The Oxford Group worked out a strategy which they called taking a town. They would move into a town and spend a week. Sometimes there would be street preaching, there would be small meetings, and there would always be large meetings in a hotel ballroom, and they would tell us about themselves and God. One night during the week when they were taking Richmond, the ballroom of the Jefferson Hotel was filled, and the group on the stage was particularly impressive; we felt that they were not going to let us down. The girl from Pasadena was the awkward type which goes to the most expensive finishing schools and majors in horseback riding. When it was her turn to share, she stepped to the front of the stage and spoke in a high nasal twang:

"Naow, there are two sets in Pasadena, the slow set, and the fast set, and you better believe I did not belong to the slow set!" she beamed at us proudly. The upshot of her story was that she had found God, and the more the merrier. From then on, we were inclined to designate what we did not like about the Oxford Group as the Pasadena of it.

When you find yourself before the same kind of an audience which a Noel Coward or a Bernard Shaw play would draw, it is an irresistible challenge to be as entertaining as possible. Besides this, there seemed to be too much of panacea in what they offered us, and there was an emphasis on earthly rewards which usually meant that a relative had died and left money to the hard-pressed Oxford Grouper—a relative who probably did not want to die.

On the other hand, the Group was insisting on sin when the Episcopal Church was taking "miserable sinners" out of the litany; and while the organization of the church was getting bigger and better, the Group reminded us of the essence of the church, the individual, and his need for personal conversion.

I only discuss the Oxford Group Movement here as Sherry and I estimated it in our desire to discover the most effective ministry. Some day someone will write a complete and objective history of it, with all of the good and all of the bad, and it will make an exciting book.

Sherry became a good synthetic southerner. His interest in southern history and his admiration for General Lee made his relationships pleasant with his southern congregations in spite of his activities for the Negro. But there are twenty-five Episcopal churches in Richmond, and four of them were within a radius of five blocks of our church. Richmonders go to a particular church because their great-grandfathers went to it. During the depression years few new people moved to town. When an Episcopal family arrived with no church ties, word got around quickly. Sherry often called and found the rector of St. Paul's Church and the rector of St. James' Church on the doorstep.

Richmonders went away for adventure, and returned to die and to be buried in Hollywood Cemetery. During our sixth winter in Richmond, Sherry had thirteen funerals in fourteen days, and he felt that his work was almost finished, and that soon he would have no parishioners left.

Here The Southern Churchman, which Mr. Montague had edited, came back into my life. Uncle Tom had secured control of The Southern Churchman to fight the historical and scientific approach to the Bible, which he felt was instigated by the devil himself. He opened its pages to any articulate fundamentalists who came to his attention, and the rest of the pages he devoted to exposing Abraham Lincoln as an enemy of humanity. He was violent and vociferous, and the paper burned with the zeal of Jeremiah. Then

Uncle Tom died, and The Southern Churchman was left without a cause. It was ninety-eight years old, and it seemed a pity to let a magazine which had weathered so many years die now. The all but forgotten board of directors, the executors of Uncle Tom's estate, and some clergymen were called to hold a clinic over the tired little paper. Most of those present offered money for subsidy. Sherry, having no money, offered to give his services as a writer for it, and he was immediately made the editor. He found it fun to advance all sorts of opinions and schemes in the editorial pages, although he did not expect to be read. He wrote about the things which were uppermost in his mind, and nothing seemed more important as a subject of discussion than the collision of Richmond churches. He was at the helm of a successful combination; why could there not be others? Leeds, in England, was making an interesting demonstration of a coöperative plan for all the churches in town; why could it not be done here?

Then one Sunday there was an interesting element in our congregation. In an integrated, family church, a committee stands out excitingly. Like any rector's wife, I knew a committee when I saw one. After the service, I met this committee in the rector's office.

Zeboim Patten had come from Chattanooga, to my intense dismay, to ask Sherry to become rector of St. Paul's Church there. I would not go to Chattanooga. Bome came to dinner with us in the little house which we had built to be as near as possible to "Sunny Crest," and I told him clearly that I was not interested in his call.

"I likemy family, and they are all around me. That path under the apple tree leads to 'Sunny Crest.' Through the magnolias, you can see the white columns of Uncle Johnny's 'Paxton,' and beyond the mimosas is Aunt Kate's 'Kenwyn.' You look skeptical, but they all like Sherry, and we like being here." "We will do everything in our power to make you like Chattanooga just as much," he said. "I have a large family, too, and I will be only too glad to share them with you! And think of the opportunity your husband will have in the church."

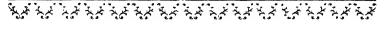
"Everybody with a call talks about opportunity," I said rudely.

"Yes, but I happen to know how much competition he is up against in Richmond. I know how many Episcopal churches there are in town, and I know how many there are right here in this section. Now in Chattanooga there are five Episcopal churches, and he will be the rector of all of them. We read *The Southern Churchman*, and we know that he is just the man." He then proceeded to explain to me the "Chattanooga Plan," a model of church coöperation, foolproof against wasteful competition, overlapping work, and over-churched communities. It was a masterpiece of planning. I was impressed, and I looked at Sherry and was as sure of his decision as I had been when he bought the bright blue suit with the yellow stripe to wear to Texas. I put in a final weak objection:

"Sherry likes to preach; perhaps he isn't an administrator at all."

"I have an idea that he is, and anyway, we aren't asking him to do anything the laymen can do."

I saw that Sherry must go. If I was not convinced that it was also a good move for the children and me, that was because I underestimated the power and imagination of Bome; I was ignorant of the friendliness and charm of Tennessee; I forgot the endless dramas that are played around a church, and I did not yet realize the interest the church would always hold for me, no matter how little I wanted to go into another strange land.



CHATTANOOGA

7

THERE WE WERE on the train once more heading into the unknown. Only this time it was not just Sherry and Charlie and I. This time Charlie and Maria were in the berth over our heads, two-months-old Betsy was in a basket at my feet, and the Negro maid on whom our civilization was founded was in a berth outside the stateroom.

There were the wheels again, droning the song the Israelies had sung in their exile. It came less clearly now, through the distractions of a family, but it was still poignant.

When we arrived in Chattanooga, Bome met us at the train, and on the way to the rectory, he eagerly pointed out the things which were most dear to him. It all looked dirty and smoky to me, and extremely ordinary. Which all goes to prove how ordinary extraordinary things can look at a first preoccupied glance.

The afternoon was late when we reached the rectory, and after putting Betsy into the arms of a nurse, who was the daughter of Bome's gardener, we went to his house to dinner. Things still seemed commonplace, though unusually comfortable for a first night in a strange place. After dinner the children were sent to bed, and Bome insisted that we should drive with him to Lookout Mountain. He could not wait any longer to show us the best thing about Chattanooga, and so we must drive up the mountain in the dark of the moon. On the terrace of his mountain house, he pointed

out to us the Tennessee River winding through the valley two thousand feet below, and we obligingly admired the inky blackness. He took us into his pretty, comfortable living-room with its windows over the Valley. There on the mantel was a little statue which I had been vaguely trying to remember. It was Billiken. When I was five years old, my brother Peyton was born, and aunts and uncles came bearing gifts. My cynical Aunt Edith brought a little statue of Billiken, because she said he locked just like the new baby. I resented it bitterly, and I broke Billiken at my first opportunity. Now for the first time I read around the base the legend, "The God of Things as They Ought to Be."

We went out again into the darkness, and I banged my head against an awning. I was too polite to mention the fact that I was seeing stars which had not been there the minute before, and it really must have been quite a blow, because from that moment on nothing was commonplace again as long as we stayed in Chattanooga. The Mountain was magic, and Bome was The God of Things As They Ought To Be, he was Lob and Puck and Billiken. As I came to know the people of the town, they were to me well-drawn characters in an engrossing drama. Once more I was the wide-eyed little girl who had been a fairy in a Ben Greet performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream, thrilled by my nearness to the actors and actresses.

Chattanooga is an ugly, dirty city, but it is at the bottom of a cup, and around it is the rim we were always crawling up like flies. Lookout Mountain, Signal Mountain and Missionary Ridge. They were names out of my history book. Lookout Mountain is breathtakingly beautiful, and obliging with its magic. The homes are built along its ledge, and their gardens tumble down its rocks; the hanging gardens of Babylon could not have been more spectacular. We were given a summer rectory on Lookout Mountain. Our cottage

looked across Bome's garden, through the trimmed Italian cedars which led down to his swimming pool, across the Valley to the rippling Cumberlands beyond. In the morning the swimming pool belonged to the children, but in the afternoon I had it luxuriously to myself. I floated there on the edge of the world through long summer afternoons, steeped in beauty and enchantment. I wondered how I had ever thought a profession might be drab which had brought so much beauty into my life.

The vestry of an Episcopal church is made up of a group of laymen who contribute their various business abilities to the aid of the rector in running the church. It is headed by two men who are called the Senior Warden and the Junior Warden; the original terms for these two officers of the vestry were People's Warden and Rector's Warden. Bome was the Rector's Warden, and he took his assignment seriously. "And I never forget," he would say, making a Puckish obeisance to me, "my responsibility for my rector's wife!" The church is close to his heart, and he gives it the same thought and care that he gives his business. He enjoys the companionship of the clergy as much as clergymen enjoy each other; he draws them to him and creates for them an atmosphere of irresponsible gaiety. The meeting of a synod or a convention was the signal for Bome to give a house party in the best hotel in the prevailing town. The house party usually consisted of his rector and his rector's wife, and when possible two former rectors and their wives. This meant more than one suite at the hotel, and a continual stream of our friends through the apartment for drinks and sandwiches, and a little light politics.

The General Convention of the Episcopal Church meets once in three years, and it is the legislative body of the church. It consists of a House of Bishops and a House of Deputies, the latter being made up of four clerical and four lay deputies elected by each of the dioceses. Since the system is the same as that of the United States Government, and since it was set up in this country before the United States Government, Episcopalians will tell you that their pattern was imitated by the Founding Fathers. However that might be, the General Convention is the clergyman's favorite excursion, and a highly prized reward for good work. For the two and a half weeks that the Convention is in session, the deputies work hard, and then like lawyers and candlestick makers, they relax. Wives should not go unless they have a rector's warden like Bome. At the General Convention in Cincinnati in 1937, Bome had a piano moved into our living-room, and anyone walking into the hotel lobby was led straight to our rooms by the noise.

Provinces are groups of dioceses with the same geographical problems, and Provincial Synods meet to discuss, but not to legislate, once in each of the years between General Conventions. At a meeting of the Synod in New Orleans in 1936, momentous church matters were discussed, and I discovered oysters Rockefeller at Antoine's Restaurant, and the romance of Royale Street, and I came home laden with vertivert. That was when Bome gave a house party at the Roosevelt Hotel.

In between conventions, Bome would say, "How about a little fishing on the St. John's River? The rector's warden thinks the rector needs a little fishing. Fishing is good for the soul." The Noah's Ark is Bome's houseboat on the St. John's River in Florida. On it we drifted down the string of lakes which form the river, anchoring here and there to float out in little boats and troll lazily for black bass. Along the edge of the river cows waded out to munch water hyacinths, heron flapped over our heads, and the fragrance of orange blossoms was wafted to us from the shore.

I am afraid there is not another rector's warden in the

Episcopal Church like Bome Patten; he remains alone on his throne, "The God of Things As They Ought To Be."

As the days went by, we learned the character of the town, and we realized that Chattanooga had a strong personality. In spite of its location, it was not a southern city; something had happened after the War Between the States to keep it from being predominantly southern. Yankee soldiers who had been in camp nearby had gone back to Ohio and Illinois and had thought of the crude little village with its remarkable location, and they returned to Chattanooga to make it an industrial city. Carpet baggers came and dropped their carpet bags, and put down roots, and the town became infused with their energy and their accents. Northerners made money and built big houses on East Terrace. Southerners lined up on Missionary Ridge, and held it against all comers. Intermarriage was of the Capulet and Montague variety. For a long time it was awkward for these former enemies to go to church and worship the same God. Northern Presbyterians and Southern Presbyterians, Northern Methodists and Southern Methodists built separate churches. The Episcopalians, as usual, were a small group in a new place, and they had one church building, where the northern element sat on one side of the middle aisle, and the southerners sat on the other, and they disputed the question of whether their rector should be a northerner or a southerner. Finally they hit on a satisfactory compromise, and English rectors filled their pulpit until 1923. Sherry was the third rector to be born in the United States; the strong lines of the blue and gray had faded, and the Civil War was at last over.

States rights had been settled, but Chattanooga was still a battleground, and no one could move to town and remain bored, or indifferent to political and economic programs. The valley of the Tennessee River, which looked quiet and peaceful from the ledges of Lookout Mountain, had been chosen by the United States Government for its demonstration of government owned and distributed electricity. Another civil war was on, and once more the center aisle of St. Paul's Church became a great gulf. It seemed a shame that the Tennessee Power and Light Company, which had given efficient service for years, was the one which must be squeezed out, but the Tennessee Valley was undeniably the place for the experiment which would "soak the country in electricity," and give to small farmers a chance which they had never had before and which they could not get for themselves. Private capital had dreamt of harnessing the river for years, but had never dared attempt it, and now it was to be done.

It is not easy when any sort of a war is on for the church to remember that it must transcend politics, and go back to the causes of conflict and the roots of evil. By the time war is declared, it is too late to talk about causes and roots; our sins are on our head. In spite of all the temptations to divide, and all the influences loose in town which normally cause splits, the church in Chattanooga became more united than ever. The plan of coördination which Bome had spoken of, the Chattanooga Plan, had been worked out for the six churches of the town, and it could be imitated to advantage all over the country.

Under a succession of good rectors, and with dynamic lay leadership, St. Paul's Church had become as large as any Episcopal church in the South, with as efficient and effective organizations as any in the country. When Americans can afford to do so, they move to the suburbs, and then they find it hard to come to town for church on their day off. In recognition of this tendency, St. Paul's Church had built a chapel on Lookout Mountain. Now, besides the chapel, the other

four churches were to be put under the rectorship of St. Paul's, with vicars appointed to serve them. Each one presented a special problem in coördination. Christ Church was Anglo-Catholic. It had originally been the abortive effort of the southerners to have a parish of their own, but one of their rectors had discovered Anglo-Catholicism and had startled his congregation with incense, mass, formal confession, eucharistic vestments, reserved sacraments, and all the other trappings. A few of his people were pleased, but the majority of the members of the parish decided that Yankees smelled better than incense, and they went back to St. Paul's. The handful who were left faced problems and debt which were almost too much for them. Old antagonisms, and a low-church rector from Virginia made them hesitate to come under the plan. Eventually they accepted it, and with the help of St. Paul's, and with a masterful effort of their own, they paid off their huge mortgage and have remained in the system to minister to those people who find it easier to worship God with the aid of ritual and furnishings.

In-As-Much Mission had been founded in the mill district to counteract the orgies of the Church of God, which is a more Christian thing to do than it sounds. It also did case work in that section of the town which had a high proportion of delinquency. This mission would now be under the directorship of St. Paul's, which would be a good thing, since it would give to St. Paul's an awareness and sense of

responsibility for sociological causes and effects.

Grace Church had been placed in a real estate development which quickly deteriorated and which the city bypassed. This must be moved to a more strategic location, but its congregation could not rebuild without help. Thankful Memorial was the church in St. Elmo, a minor but romantic suburb since it was the setting for the old melodrama of the

'90s, the favorite of stock companies, the play called St. Elmo. Both of these churches were so hard-pressed by their efforts to raise enough money to exist that they found it impossible to work out constructive programs for service and education. They were only too glad to come into the Chattanooga Plan.

Besides the financial advantages which came out of the coördinated budget, these churches were given chances to develop themselves. They could now have their parish papers and publicity. The director of religious education would not only work in St. Paul's, which had always been able to afford one, but she could share her time with the smaller churches and train volunteers to work regularly in the various parishes. The parish institute, held each fall, trained lay leaders for the work of various units. The professional organist at St. Paul's could advise and help with the music in the other churches. The rich did not get tucked away into a beautiful small suburban parish, but continued to be challenged with the larger work of the city and diocese. Churches could not spring up like mushrooms wherever there was a dissatisfied group of church people. Instead, after careful study, they would be built where they were needed. The clergy, holding regular staff meetings, would coöperate and help each other, and together they would discover neglected areas. The best thing about the Plan is that it is as good in practice as it sounds on paper.

Chattanooga became a training ground for young men fresh from seminaries, and there were always attractive young curates and vicars around. With the variety of churches, a man could be assigned to the type of work for which he seemed best suited. For instance, when Bob Jackson joined the staff, he was given Christ Church because he let it be known that he was an Anglo-Catholic. He had been a Presbyterian who had come into the Episcopal Church

because he liked the ritual. He came with black silk shirts, and a desire to be called Father, and Christ Church was indicated. A prayer book is no help at Christ Church. There the services of Solemn Benediction and Imposition of the Ashes, and High and Low Mass are printed on cards. At the end of a year, Sherry was not too unhappy when Bob cried "Uncle!" and announced that he was no longer an Anglo-Catholic.

Our curates and vicars did not stay long; they were called away to other parishes, and then Sherry would look up replacements. The Old Grad naturally turns to his Alma Mater, and when Bob Jackson left his curacy at St. Paul's Church, Chattanooga, to go to Kingsport, Tennessee, and Sherry said, "I'll just run up to Alex and see what Zab has," I knew he was planning to visit the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria and consult Dean Zabriskie.

Zab told Sherry that the next class had been pretty well picked over before Sherry got there, but that he had a hot potato left if Sherry wanted to talk to him.

The hot potato was produced and turned out to be a charming young Scotchman who professed revolutionary social ideas. The Episcopal Church is not famous for its revolutionary social ideas, and rectors of large churches, looking for curates, had shied away from Johnny Cassell. Johnny had come over from Scotland with his family when he was twelve years old, and he was now twenty-three. The years between had been hard years for his family, and he had known what it meant for his father not to have a job, and he had known insecurity and even hunger. With Scotch perseverance he had gotten his education and worked his way through college, and was to graduate from the Seminary in June. Sherry said to Johnny that he was thinking of offering him a curacy, and Johnny looked him straight in the eye and said, "You ought to know, sir, that I have been

turned down by others because of my beliefs." Sherry found this frankness irresistible and he engaged Johnny on the spot.

Now how was he to sell this young radical to the vestry of St. Paul's Church? He came home and called a vestry meeting, and met with it nervously. It would be better to put all the cards on the table since Johnny's political beliefs would never be concealed, and so he told the industrialists who were sitting around the table with him that the curate he had engaged was a social radical who would probably condemn everything they did in business, but that he was honest and attractive and was sure to be popular. Then he waited for their reaction which was not slow in coming.

"It is important that we should be stimulated to more thought on social justice," said George Patten, and this was the spirit in which Johnny Cassell was accepted.

Sherry still wondered if he should play safe and put Johnny to work at the mission in the mill district, but in the end, in a spirit of adventure, he put him at the chapel on Lookout Mountain, in the middle of all its beauty and wealth. Johnny did not like rich people; nobody could make money without being crooked. He would tell them so. Then Johnny became ill. He had come to the rectory for dinner with us, but he could not swallow. He had a high fever and an infected throat and must be taken to a hospital immediately. Within twenty-four hours, his room at the hospital was banked with flowers sent by his new parishioners. As he recovered, special foods were sent in to him, and when we called to see him, we found a puzzled young Scotchman.

"I am being bribed," he said, "these people are trying to bribe me. But they needn't think they can," he added fiercely.

His convalescence was spent on a terrace over the Valley, where he squirmed some, and worried about his own soul and the souls of his parishioners. When he was well enough, there were parties arranged in his honor, and these he found he could sometimes actually enjoy. Sherry and he both began to worry lest he forget all of his social gospel, but this was bred into him, and he could not forget it. What he did learn on Lookout Mountain and at In-As-Much Mission was that there are no easy divisions of the wicked rich and the virtuous poor, and that people can only be considered as people.

Of all the people who trooped through our rectory in Chattanooga, the most wistfully appealing was Thorburn.

He had come to town from some country crossroads to go to the University of Chattanooga. His background was thoroughly non-conformist of a primitive variety, but the color and pageant of the Episcopal service appealed to him, and he became quite regular at St. Paul's. Sherry befriended him and found that the boy was poor and lonely. He came often to the rectory, and he usually went home with some book of art or travel under his arm. To us he was pathetically wistful. To the boys and girls of the college, he assumed an anti-social and supercilious attitude which made him immediately unpopular.

My path down town lay across the campus, and no matter how carefully I had dressed before leaving home, these bright young college girls made me feel dowdy. Their skirts and sweaters were every color of the rainbow, and bows like butterflies perched on their pretty heads. They swarmed out of the gothic doors of the college between classes, hand-in-hand with boys who wore slacks and dirty sweaters. They formed into little groups eternally drinking cokes and eating potato chips. Thorburn should have been in one of these gay groups, but he never was. He too came out of the doors of the college, and two minutes later not a boy or a girl could

have told you which way he had gone, so little did they care.

Finally in a flood of bitterness, Thorburn came to see the rector. It was chiefly a pent-up loneliness which brought him to see Sherry. Loneliness and the inability to break through his isolation, which caused him to turn his reproaches on the students and faculty.

"They are all so dull, and so smug," he said. Sherry heard him out, and then said,

"They aren't that bad really, you know. You probably aren't too polite and receptive with them. Do you need some money? I haven't much in my own pocketbook right now, but here is three dollars. If you are careful, it should last till Saturday; then you come by the rectory and see me, and we will try to work out something."

Thorburn was grateful and stuffed the money into his pocket. He had certainly had very little to eat lately, and he left the church making a mental budget of how he would spend this dollar a day. He wondered if the rector knew that his pockets had been entirely empty, and bitterness welled up in him again. He who dreamed of living hard and gloriously, he who had a boundless capacity for loving music and painting and travel, was pinned to this meager allowance of education and food, and a still more meager allowance of beauty.

Thorburn was hungry, and the clock in the city hall was striking six. But he could not eat yet. He must put it off as long as possible. He thought of a little restaurant, the kind you read of in novels of New York or London or Paris, a vague little restaurant, but the rendezvous of gourmets. Thorburn's way led him by the Best Hotel, and he turned into it. It would make no dent in the roll of three one-dollar bills to sit for a while on the balcony, and it was easier to do his particular kind of dreaming in the Best Hotel. Sitting in a luxurious chair he could turn his thoughts into green

pastures. And there was that little restaurant. It had shaded lights, and a pretty, animated waitress recommended dishes to him with gestures. Thorburn had no eyes for the black-eyed waitress, for across the table from him sat a nebulous composite of all the beautiful blonde actresses of Hollywood, a dainty creature who filled Thorburn with pride in his own dark, crude strength.

Thorburn came out of his dream and realized that someone had sat down in the chair next to his on the hotel balcony. He turned from his fascinated gaze into the lights and met the eyes of a flesh-and-blood girl who breathed an almost inaudible "Hello."

Still more in Soho than here, he heard himself replying, and then he heard an extraordinary suggestion. He got to his feet and the girl arose too. A heady perfume enveloped them. He took her arm and guided her down the stairs and out into the street. No girl had ever approached him before, and he remembered his three dollars.

"If you are very careful-" the rector had said.

A not unpleasant voice was chattering at his elbow, undaunted by his monosyllabic answers. Half way up Maple Street, she stopped before a large house with a brown stone front.

"We'll go in here," she said.

For a moment he wondered frantically, "What will it cost? Is three dollars enough?" He took a deep breath. Perhaps life had found him at last. He wanted to experience everything, he wanted this experience too.

He followed the girl into a characterless hall and up narrow stairs. On the third floor she unlocked a door. She groped for a lamp and lighted it and waved him in. On the threshold he stopped. He looked at the lamp; it had a pink skirt and a china head. A grotesque doll lay on the bed on a pile of untidy pillows. Then he looked at the girl. She

was a voluptuous type, her cheeks and lips were bright, and her skin and hair were as dark and coarse as his own. He took a step towards her. It was not going to be a bad experience. Then he heard the rector's words again, "It will last till Saturday—if you are very careful."

In a flash he knew he could not stay. He mumbled something about "Sorry—date—gotta go," and was stumbling down the stairs in a cold perspiration. Once in the street he put his hand in his pocket and felt his three dollars.

"God, I'm hungry!"

With the exhilaration of purpose in his steps he walked back to the Best Hotel. In the glittering dining-room he found a table for two set in a friendly corner with a lamp on it.

"If you are very careful," the rector had said.

Yes, there on the menu was a two dollar dinner, and a one dollar bottle of vin ordinaire. An hour and a half later he had the dining-room to himself. No, not quite to himself. Across the table from him, floating in the soft glow of the lamp, was a vague likeness of all the beautiful blondes in Hollywood, and he was smiling fatuously at her. An impatient waitress crossed the floor towards him just as Thorburn rose uncertainly to his feet and raised his wine glass.

"To the mosh beautiful angel—" At that point he fell with a crash across the table.

That night Sherry found him somehow and brought him to the rectory, where he spent a repentant and sobering twenty-four hours. He told his story as we sat by the fire, I on one side of the hearth with my knitting, and he on the other side, holding tight to his aching head.

The Men's Club was to have a supper meeting in the parish house, and as a member of the committee I had driven about town picking up the hams and the apple pies

which are as much a part of Men's Club meetings as the soloist who sings Indian Love Songs. Arriving at the parish house with my arms piled high with a stack of pies, I bumped into Sherry at the door. He had with him a large, raw-boned woman, dark and fierce looking, whom he introduced as Mrs. Jordan.

"You will take Mrs. Jordan home, won't you, Maria?" I shifted the pies to his hands and tucked a ham into the crook of each of his elbows, and Mrs. Jordan and I got into the car. As we drove off, she looked lovingly back at the church.

"Those low lifers at my rooming house always want to know why the hell I go to church anyway. I tell them they can talk about me all they want to, and I don't give a damn what they say, but they can't say anything against my church and my Jesus, because I love them both," she said. I slid a quick glance at her, and decided that if I lived in her rooming house, I would be very quiet.

"Have you always been a member of St. Paul's?" I asked. "Ever since I was a kid at Sunday School," she answered. What lovely associates one can find at Sunday School, I thought to myself; what a broadening experience it is! I went back to the rectory, but I could not get Mrs. Jordan out of my mind. When I heard Sherry's step in the hall at lunch time, I went running down the stairs to ask him to explain his violent friend.

"Of course I don't expect to do much with Mrs. Jordan," he told me, "but there is a daughter, Anna Katherine. Anna Katherine and her mother share a bedroom in a pretty terrible boarding house, and Anna Katherine, aged fifteen, is beginning to stay out at night with a high school boy. Mrs. Jordan pays me frequent visits, anticipating the worst."

"And what can you do about it?" I asked.

"I wish I had someone trained professionally in youth

consultation work to turn the case over to, but since there is none nearer than Knoxville, I find myself using various unscientific methods. I am bribing Anna Katherine with a prize for better work in high school, and a new dress at the end of the month, if she behaves herself. I rather hope to find a little flat for the Jordans so that Anna Katherine can bring her boy friends home. That, of course, is the real trouble, over-crowding; the girl has the cards stacked against her."

When Anna Katherine finally took the fatal step in spite of new dresses from the preacher, Sherry told me the news. Mrs. Jordan needed a lot of consolation and help.

"It is good for me to have to work on the case," he said. "There aren't many social service cases in St. Paul's, and I must keep my hand in. Besides that, I have a little game which amuses me. You know how much we like to say that every woman in the church is on the roll of the Woman's Auxiliary? I like to imagine Mrs. Jordan attending the meetings of each of our super-respectable chapters in turn. Are Mrs. Jordan and Mrs. Harrington, who lives in a big house on Lookout Mountain, sisters under the skin? You see where it leads you in the whole consideration of good and evil."

For the future care of the child, Sherry had the baby's father, who was the high school boy, sign a paper admitting his paternity. The church secretary witnessed the signing since she shared with Sherry the guardianship of the derelicts who came through the church office. The boy, young Tommy, made no objection to any of this, and for a while all was sweetness and light. Tommy and Anna Katherine were really very fond of each other and were anxious to be married. They went shopping together for the baby, and they brought the little shirts around to the church to show Sherry and the secretary once when I was there. Our eyes were all quite dewy.

Then the storm broke. Tommy's mother and Mrs. Jordan moved in the same social circles, and there was no love lost between them. That is an understatement. Tommy's mother made up her mind that this marriage would take place over her dead body, or, if necessary, over Mrs. Jordan's dead body, and she laid her campaign accordingly. Her first step was to make the children hate each other. The little shirts were forgotten. Then she had a better idea.

Sherry came home one afternoon in a decidedly nervous condition. He was rubbing the back of his head and biting his finger nails, which were signs of nervousness I knew well by now.

"For goodness' sake, Sherry, do sit down and tell me what is the matter," I said.

"It's pretty bad," he answered. "You probably won't like it at all."

"You'll have to tell me anyway, won't you?"

"I suppose you should know. Well—er—Miss Alexander says that Tommy's mother is telling everybody that I am the father of Anna Katherine's child!"

"Why, of course, you have been attentive, you know. Dresses, and paying the rent on the flat, which didn't help a bit. That's the classic system, isn't it?"

"She thinks I should deny it. Do you think I should deny it?"

"Remember Mark Sabre in that old novel by A. S. M. Hutchinson, If Winter Comes? You can feel just like Mark Sabre; won't that be nice? Only I won't leave you. In fact," I said musingly, "I think I am going to enjoy this. You just forget it. If you don't mind, I shall give you a little worldly advice: don't pay too many pastoral calls at the hospital when the baby is born!"

It was Mrs. Jordan who had the final word. She had

Tommy brought into court on a charge of rape. Because of the paper which Tommy had signed, and because Genevieve the church secretary had witnessed the signing, Sherry was subpoenaed as a witness. He put on his highest clerical collar and spent a long, hot day in court in this strange capacity.

Poor Tommy was convicted on a technical charge, but the humane judge let him off with a suspended sentence provided he marry the girl. Since the parents had succeeded in making the children antagonistic to each other, Sherry decided that the wedding was a job for the justice of the peace. When the baby girl arrived, Sherry and Genevieve arranged a fine baptism, and Genevieve gave the baby her first break by accepting the responsibility of being godmother. Now the little girl, like her grandmother, is a regular attendant at St. Paul's Sunday School, and Genevieve watches her language in case her Biblical phrases should become misplaced.

In the rectory, the words "Remember your illegitimate child!" make Sherry think twice before he spreads sunshine.

Since the Lord's Song is sung in anything from jig time to plainsong, it is obvious that each clergyman contributes something to a parish, which might be quite different from that which his predecessor has to give. It is not often that a man says to himself, "I am an organizer (or a social gospeller, or a liturgist, or whatever he may be) and I have been here long enough. Now this parish needs a preacher. I will go, and give them an opportunity to grow in another direction." Sometimes this happens, and the man with the conscience will go off to a smaller work that a church may be more roundly developed. Sometimes there is no conscious strategy, but in the ordinary course of events a parish has a variety of ministries and becomes a strong parish thereby,

and such was St. Paul's. It had even in an unexpected way profited by Billy Sunday.

Certain pink journals have from time to time accused Billy Sunday of coming into a town ostensibly for a religious revival, but actually to help keep labor in its place. From one of his converts we heard of his first visit to Chattanooga. It was after the first World War when there was unrest in labor relations, that a group of mill owners had the bright idea of bringing Billy Sunday to town for a revival and a counter irritant. He would somehow make them change their unhappy, demanding tune and leave them cheerfully singing about "life being like a mountain railway," or that "they might be strangers here but heaven was their home," and "there would be stars for their crowns eventually."

Billy came and he not only quieted labor, but he converted some of the owners. He went to one of the largest factory owners and said, "Isn't it time you tried God?" and before Billy Sunday left, he had made that man and several others into indispensable Episcopalians.

Thus many things had contributed to the strength of St. Paul's. Just as in the thirteenth century, painters, musicians, and silversmiths dedicated their talents to the church, here were twentieth-century Americans giving their distinctly American gifts.

George Patten had a genius for promotion and salesmanship, and these he laid on the altar. He had put the product of his factory on the shelf of every general store and drug store in the South. He would use the same methods he had devised for sales promotion for the benefit of the Episcopal Church in Chattanooga. He was chairman of the Every Member Canvass, and under his leadership it became the answer to every parson's prayer.

Two hundred and fifty workers were organized to call on the twelve hundred parishioners, and in order that this might be done as quickly and efficiently as possible, it would be done on Sunday. The congregation was asked by announcement and by letter to stay at home on a certain Sunday until they had been visited. There would be no eleven-o'clock service. I told Sherry that this was breaking apostolic succession, and suppose some illiterate came at eleven o'clock, or suppose a clerical friend from out of town should be spending Sunday in Chattanooga on his way home from Florida, as sometimes happened, and found us playing whooping games instead of going to church? At my instigation he read morning prayer at the historic hour.

The day started with an eight-o'clock service of Holy Communion, and this the workers attended in a body. Then after breakfast they were turned loose on the community in teams. As each team completed its assignment, it returned to the parish house and reported to George and his staff. The first team to finish its visits, the first team to reach its quota of pledges, and the team to bring in the greatest increase in pledges were given prizes; and there were runner-up prizes and consolation prizes. George's prizes were worth working for. He had hams and suitcases full of plain and fancy sugar, and cartons of canned goods, and big packages of assorted bath towels. It was work and it was fun and it was effective. Every parishioner was called on, and eleven hundred pledges were brought in. The day ended with a big evening service. Bome had been right when he said, "We won't ask our rector to do anything the laymen can do."

Chattanooga was too good to last. With the security and comfort our souls were in danger of becoming "lean withal," as the old Bishop had threatened us. It was inevitable that the day would come when we would leave.

The National Council of the Episcopal Church administers the legislation of the General Convention during the three years between meetings. It directs the missionary work, re-

ligious education, and social relations of the national church, and its offices are at 281 Fourth Avenue, New York City. Over the years, a lack of sympathy had become evident between the National Council and the various churches throughout the country. Sometimes the congregations and rectors resented the money which must be sent to what had come to be called "281," for work which seemed so far away; clergymen often resented the letters and pamphlets which they received from "281" telling them how to run their parishes. This irritation must be changed to friendliness, and a new office was created, "vice-president in charge of promotion and propaganda." Propaganda was originally an ecclesiastical word, having to do with the spreading of the Christian faith. In this title it was restored to its ecclesiastical meaning. Sherry, being a warm-hearted Irishman, who liked the clergy, and who knew their problems, and who looked upon the whole of mankind as his friends, was asked to take the job.

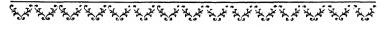
A clergyman is supposed to pray hard when he receives a call, and it can be disappointing to him when he does not find the answer written in the sky like I. J. Fox: "STAY IN CHATTANOGA!" or "Go to the National Council!" It does not happen like that. Sherry confessed that the Lord answered his prayers for guidance when he received a call, but the answer was unexpected. Instead of a clearly spoken "Go" or "Stay," the Lord seemed to say that He did not care whether calls were accepted or rejected, but He did care that the work, wherever it might be, was done in the name of the Lord, and not for the glorification of Charles Sheerin.

Sherry's father had told him that when a call came, it was really two calls: a call to go, and a call to stay. I was always on the stay side. This was realistically explained by my analytical friend in Chattanooga, Winifred McAllester: "At our age, Maria," she said, "women tend to settle down into a comfortable groove, while men like to move because it rejuvenates them to be given a second chance, a new start."

After a decision is made, an inevitable reaction comes, and the inevitable question keeps the parson awake at night, "Is it really the right thing?" Then he has to clench his teeth and hold tight to his decision.

With all this, I always felt that with Sherry there was a minimum of travailing in indecision. He did not take long to make up his mind, and once made, in spite of the emotional reaction, he did not change it. When he decided to go to the National Council, I think he forgot to add Charlie and Maria and Betsy and me; we had become Chattanoogans, and we did not want to be moved ever again. In spite of our unhappy protests, he found the challenge irresistible, and once more we and our furniture must be shattered by a move.

We said a sad good-by to Bome, the Rector's Warden, and to Genevieve, the church secretary, who was the real assistant rector, and to Thorburn and to the Illegitimate Child, and to the attractive young curates, and to the Yankees and the Rebels, and the Anglo-Catholics and the Protestant Episcopalians, to the Tennessee Electric and Power Company, and to the Tennessee Valley Authority, and to all our friends who had made us their family, and it was harder than it had been to leave Richmond.



THE NATIONAL COUNCIL

8

When the office of vice-president of the National Council in charge of promotion and publicity was created, everyone was a little vague as to its specific function. Sherry, when he went into it, called for a survey of the National Council and of the possibilities of the new job. He must be convinced of the thing to be promoted. Was the National Council set up as efficiently as such an organization can be? Just where did the new vice-president hang his hat? To whom was he vice-president? The Presiding Bishop had been his professor at the Virginia Seminary and had been his "Father in God" in the Diocese of Virginia. Now Sherry must rethink this man who had become the head and figure-head of the Episcopal Church.

An efficiency engineer was called in to make the survey. When he came to the office of Presiding Bishop, which had undergone a metamorphosis at the General Convention of 1937, he made a penetrating remark: "You have given the Presiding Bishop dictatorial powers, and you have given him the office which he holds until he reaches retirement age, and then you elected the bishop in the church least likely to be a dictator."

This Presiding Bishop was Henry St. George Tucker. The Tuckers are the most prominent clerical family in the Episcopal Church—at least they are the largest. Henry St. George Tucker is the eldest of the thirteen children of the late Bishop of Southern Virginia, Beverley Dandridge Tucker, and his wife, Maria Washington Tucker. When he was elected Presiding Bishop, the first reaction was the surprise expressed by someone who said, "Nobody ever really believed a spiritual man could get the job!"

If 1898 had used the jargon of today, "S'in'george," as he was called in Virginia, would have been known as The Brain. I know because my father and S'in'george were at the University of Virginia together, and I have it on good authority that no one could ever catch S'in'george reading a text-book, and yet he was always at the top of the Dean's list of honor students.

He also has the reputation for having fins, because he is as much at home in the water as on land. His father's ministry was spent in Norfolk, and Tucker summers were spent in a big cottage on the sands of Virginia Beach. The story of S'in'george taking a book and an umbrella and floating for hours beyond the surf is repeated with awe throughout the church. It does not surprise me. S'in'george is the oldest of thirteen brothers and sisters, and I am the oldest of eight, and I know that the oldest of large families have to go a long way sometimes for quiet. The little Tuckers were not impressed by this aquatic accomplishment of their brother: "S'in'george's books are so dry, they wouldn't get wet if he dropped them in the water," they scornfully remarked. Now it is no secret that he balances his literary diet with detective stories.

The story of this large Tucker family of clergymen stands in sharp contrast to the stuffy brand of rector who feels that the church has endowed him with social prestige and who has discovered that he can make a good thing of the church in a worldly way. When Maria and Beverley Tucker started their mmistry in Warsaw, it was the period in the Virginia church when the preacher's salary was paid in bags of potatoes, baskets of eggs, and old hens more often than money. Dollar bills were scarce, and the spending of them called for thought and even worry. One day the express man brought a package to the Warsaw rectory, and unfortunately there was a collect charge on it of one dollar, and Mrs. Tucker had been carefully hoarding, against a great emergency, two one-dollar bills. She handed one of the precious bills to the express man, and for a minute laid the other bill on the table. Through the open door came a gust of wind and swept the last bill into the fire.

"Now," said Mrs. Tucker, "I won't have to worry about how to spend that dollar!" In this freedom the little Tuckers grew up.

Bishop Tucker's first twenty-five years in the ministry were spent in Japan. Beginning in a far-off, unknown section, his efforts at relief during a famine won him undying fame. He volunteered to carry provisions into the northern district where the famine was worse. At a certain point roads stopped, and there was no mode of travel except by foot. The young missionary put the bags of rice on his back and climbed over the mountains to the starving natives. Later when the Bishop of the missionary district made his visitation and tried to tell them about the love of God and about Jesus Christ, these pagans said, "We know Jesus Christ. He is the tall man who brought us rice when we were starving!"

I hope he does not remember the first time when he and I did not meet. "Your father's friend, Mr. Tucker, who is a missionary to Japan, is on the front porch," my mother said to me one summer day. "Go out and entertain him until I come." Missionaries who do not mind going to Japan, I thought to myself, must be a strange race. Mr. Tucker must be a peculiar person. I crept to the corner of the porch and

peeped around to take a look at him first, and unfortunately his eye caught mine. The wicker chair creaked as he got up to speak to me; tall, and solemn, and still, he stood there, with a coal-black lock of hair dropping on his forehead. He seemed formidable and withdrawn, and in a panic I turned and ran because I was eight years old and I was shy and so was he.

He is still withdrawn, he still seems to be a visitor from another world. He may be a visitor from Japan, or he may be floating beyond the surf, away from confusion, a little out of reach. He keeps the secret to himself.

My father says that S'in'george is a model of independence and virtue. I claim that he is a model of independent virtue. He seems to me to be one of those people who have been jockeyed into a position of administration, who, when it comes to whipping people into taking stands, and darting busily here and there to meetings and conferences, would infinitely prefer not to have the limelight, not to have people waiting for him to tell them what to do. He took rice on his back to starving Japanese when it needed to be done; he did not form an organization to look into conditions, turn in a report, and then spend precious time bidding for rice from the rice growers who belonged to his political party. Independent virtue, either impatient or ignorant of red tape, I do not know which.

Those of us who wish that he would sometimes take a strong stand on some radical matter must always admire him for his naturalness and simplicity. How much of this simplicity is an act, nobody knows. He certainly shows, in private, that many things which did not seem to register were well known to him. Sherry insisted that he constantly had everyone's number, but disliked to show people up. In one of his few mild boastings, he said that he could tell what a Japanese wanted by the sound of his footsteps, and

some of his colleagues think that he does not confine his deductions to Japanese footsteps, and still he allows people to save face.

Whether he knows anything about the practical financing of the church, nobody knows, but certainly for most of his term as the chief bishop of the Episcopalians, the funds have come in well, and in some intangible way, high churchmen and low churchmen have united in giving him support.

Whatever he is, Sherry, gregarious and stimulated by every human contact, was the direct antithesis. The combination was usually good. Bishop Tucker had no desire to regulate or control Sherry in his promotional activities; instead, Sherry was given a free rein. Sometimes he was exasperating in his refusal to lead, or to take dictatorial stands which might have been a short cut to order.

Once Sherry said to him, "Will you ask ———" (naming an economic royalist who was a stanch Episcopalian) "to endorse our campaign?"

"I had rather not do that," the Bishop replied. "I should hate to have him feel that he must do it because I asked him."

"Promotion" was a harlot reclaimed for Jesus at some American tent meeting while Bishop Tucker had been in Japan, and he is still not quite sure she is nice. He preferred to leave her to Sherry.

The Reverend Horace Fort, rector of St. Mary's Church in Bedford, England, made a practice for many years before the war of inviting clergymen of the American Church to supply his pulpit during the summer. The American clergyman had the experience of living in an English rectory, and he sometimes had some cherished ideas of the English church shattered; I do not know of what benefit it was to St. Mary's Church, Bedford. In the summer of 1938, Sherry

went to England to preach there. He was accompanied by Charlie and two clerical friends, and they lived in the rectory, visited cathedrals between Sundays, and came back feeling broadened.

I stayed at home and tried to reconcile myself to the fact that when a man thinks he must do a job at the expense of his wife and family, his wife is expected to say, "If you feel it is your duty, dear, of course I know it is right." I did not reconcile myself to the thought, and while Sherry had considerable success in bringing about a better feeling and cooperation between the National Council and the parishes, he failed entirely with his wife, to whom the National Council became more of a villain every day. I had come to believe that there is no place more delightful to live in than rectories, and that if you have a large congregation in a small city, life cannot be dull. Now I must become one of the submerged millions in New York City. As long as I staved there I was at war with the world, from the tradesmen on Third Avenue who did not particularly want my trade and from whom I learned a new vocabulary which I must never use, to the society ladies who preside over what is called the French Room in various department stores and who refused to understand my southern accent, and said to me, looking over my head, "Modom, you will find what you want in the basement."

In July I went to New York to find an apartment. I made a special pilgrimage to 281 Fourth Avenue; since it was to be Sherry's headquarters I looked at it with a new interest. It is a strange note on Fourth Avenue, being neither church, parish house, nor office building, yet with a façade conceding a little to each. Businesslike plate glass windows hold exhibits of missionary pictures or church literature, and over its Gothic church door is a frieze of heathen being converted. There are five rows of Gothic windows above, and

the façade is topped by a cross, and on either corner are gargoyles, and minarets which are usually occupied by fat pigeons.

Inside, a rickety elevator was run by a philosophic old Irishman. I knew Sherry would never wait for the elevator, and I wished the ceilings were not so high nor the stairs so steep. I walked around the building but it did not have the cordial friendliness of a parish house, and I went out feeling no more kindly toward the National Council. My private war with it had nothing to do with assessments and missionary quotas; it had to do with the suitcase Sherry always had in his hand.

I went on about my business of house hunting, and this gave me a soothing sense of importance since I had never been to New York before for anything but pleasure. I had bought a black dress and a black hat and black gloves for the trip because I had always considered that to be the right costume for New York streets in winter or summer. Now there was a heat wave on. The papers were all screaming "Heat Wave!" and counting up with ghoulish pleasure the number of deaths from the heat, and in my black dress and hat and gloves I became self-conscious and thought I must look like either the nearest of kin, or the next to go. I went in to Altman's and bought a short-sleeved blue gingham which was against my code, and I put it on in a fitting room and then mingled inconspicuously with the steaming crowd on the street.

Now my spirits rose as they had not done since Sherry decided to leave Chattanooga. If I could not live in a rectory, I could have an apartment of my own choosing and all New York to choose from. I was not going to choose from all New York. How could anyone keep a vestige of individuality in a midtown apartment house? I would not look up town, and I would not look at anything stream-lined or even

new. Rectories were never bohemian. I would be bohemian and perhaps a little earthy and I would sell my silver and buy copper.

The apartment which I engaged after three disillusioning days was in a converted house in what is elastically known as the Gramercy section. It was a first-floor apartment, and it had been a doctor's office and had several strange features such as a stationary washstand in the bedroom which had pedals to turn on the water. There were four rooms of pleasant size and a fireplace in each room, and on that July afternoon the living-room was flooded with sunlight. I considered that the place definitely had atmosphere. I will say here that I never again saw sunlight in the apartment, because I was never again there in July. The agent promised me anything I wanted, and I ordered everything painted green, and went home pleased with the apartment, the agent and myself. I had never met an agent before, as such. When you live in rectories, you do not meet agents unless they sing in the choir or are members of the Men's Club, and you do not know how quickly their interest in you fades. You discuss such personal things with them it is probably just as well not to see them again, but it surprised me when this agent never recognized me although we passed each other frequently on the street, and at first I tried to speak to her.

The first fall meeting of the National Council was to be held in New York on October 12th, and that seemed to be a good day for Sherry and the furniture and me to converge on the apartment.

Early in the morning of October 12th, Sherry and I left our Gramercy hotel so that I could show Sherry our atmosphere before his meeting. Then I was to spend a happy day ordering furniture around. We turned the corner into our quiet street and were greeted by the sight and sound of hubbub in front of our house. There was a man in khaki slacks and shirt gesticulating frantically to the group of pugilists who had come with the truckload of furniture. The pugilists stood around with their hands on their hips and growled back at him. When he saw Sherry and me, his expression changed, and he smiled and waved a greeting.

"Look, Sherry, the janitor is waving to me! Isn't everything friendly?"

The pugilists saw us too and they were not friendly but swarmed about in great indignation.

"We don't open the truck until we have the check," was their ultimatum. "The certified check," the spokesman added.

"Of course you are going to get your money," said Sherry.
"I hope you have it already," said the man in the black flowing tie. "It is Columbus Day and the banks are closed, which might make it difficult."

That was a blow; we had certainly not taken into consideration Columbus Day, a device for a holiday which is not used in the South. The pugilists sat down on the steps and on the curbing and folded their arms. There were six of them: two to drive the truck, two to unload, and two to place the furniture. Nothing we might say about our honor as a clergyman would move them; they had never heard of a clergyman.

"No check, no furniture," was all they would say.

Sherry thought of the National Council, but it was a cold thought compared to the welcoming parishioners we had begun to take for granted. Sherry said that he would visit the cashier at 281 Fourth Avenue and see what could be done. He left me, and the janitor who was not the janitor, but our landlord, suggested that he and I should admire our new home together.

"Your selection of colors! It is magnificent! You have studied art? Yes?"

"No," I said, "I am from the South and I have studied practically nothing. I shall enjoy having open fires in those sweet little basket grates."

"Fireplaces! But you will not need fireplaces! We will keep you very warm. The mantels are beautiful, are they not? But the fireplaces I advise you not to use. They are blocked up."

That was disappointing, but of course I had not asked the agent; they had looked so real. He changed the subject

abruptly:

"You say you are not educated—ah, you have come to the right place. New York! New York! You must let me map out some courses of study for you. Together we will put something into this little head of yours. May I call you Maria? A lovely name, Maria!" He gave it a Latin pronunciation.

But I did not spend enough time in New York to be educated. Whenever Sherry went off on a trip, Betsy and I went to Richmond.

New York might have been better if Sherry had been there because he can exert an enchantment of his own. Betsy and I have waded through the slush of the dreary, crazy street called Fourteenth, and looked up to see Sherry coming to meet us, and suddenly it is not a dreary street any longer, and its craziness takes on the gaiety of a circus, and the sun breaks through the clouds, or seems to. It was no fun to have him always traveling away from us.

We applied for membership in Gramercy Park, giving impeccable Episcopal references, and we paid our money and received the key. The first time that Betsy and I went into the Park, a sparkling blanket of snow covered it all. Outside the gates cold-looking men and women, with their coat collars turned up around their red noses and vacant

eyes, were standing by the trees with dogs on leashes. I was glad we had not brought our cocker spaniel to New York. I turned my key in the lock, and we entered with the feeling of "you can start the party now, we've come!" That was because we were from the South and still expected welcomes.

We lived in New York for two years and we went regularly to the Park; then we moved to Essex Fells, New Jersey, and one late June day, Betsy and I went to the Park for the last time. The wind swept down Lexington Avenue and blew dirt in little whirls into our eves. All afternoon the Park seethed with restlessness. Twentieth Street was being dug up from Irving Place to the southwest corner of the Park, and drills put-putted at high speed. Inside the fence the seven-year-olds were soldiers and cowboys and policemen. The toddlers stuffed their mouths with gravel, and their mothers patiently attempted to de-gravel them, and the icecream men added their persistent note, "Ger your ice krim" through the bars. Mr. Hannan, benign and unruffled, with one hand on Edwin Booth's foot, was watering the ivy, and Mike was scraping the mud off a baby who had fallen into the geranium bed.

I remembered my brush with Mike on another summer day when, hot and impatient, with my hands full of toys and books, and Betsy hanging to my skirt, I had pulled and pulled at the south gate in a futile effort to open it. I called wrathfully to Mike for help. Mike motioned to me from the geraniums to go to another gate. This was too much, I thought; I had paid twenty-eight dollars for that key, and I wanted to use it on the south gate. I demanded rather curtly that Mike come and let me out. Mike came and leaned on his spade and looked at me.

"Lady," he said witheringly, "ain't you never heard of the expansion and contraction of metal? Don't you know noth-

ing about science? This gate don't open when the sun shines on it. You can't get out of this gate till after five o'clock. You've got to go 'round, lady." Meekly I gathered up Betsy and went 'round.

Betsy tugged at my hand and brought me back to now. She wanted a chocolate milkshake at the Irving Place Pharmacy, but I was not ready to go. I was leaving Gramercy Park for good, and I wanted to be slow about it. Of all the people in the Park on that hot June day, no one knew I was leaving, but then no one knew I had come. And I knew them all so well. I had worried about the tall blonde because when very pregnant she had carried her three-year-old when I was sure it was not good for her. I had watched her engage a motherly woman to take care of her husband and child while she was at the hospital. I had come back in the spring and seen the new baby in the carriage. I knew them all, and I came on Sunday afternoons as much to see what their husbands looked like as to give Betsy her outing.

How do people get into those intimate little groups, I wondered. I remembered Thorburn with a keener sympathy. Even if I had wanted it terribly, I do not believe I would have been accepted by them, and at first I wondered how Betsy would find playmates. I need not have worried; she had a system of her own. She walked up to a group and stood there until they let her in. It was as simple as that for a four-year-old, and I was pleased and proud and I bragged about it a little at home. One day when she was still new in the Park, she came running up to me sobbing brokenheartedly and threw herself across the book in my lap. Between sobs she gasped, "They won't let me play with them!" I wanted to cry too. It seemed to me that she could carry the mark of that rebuff forever, that all the social contacts of her life would be harder for this moment. I held her tight, and over her head I glared at four little girls who glared

back at me. Then a fat little thing appeared at my elbow. "Of course, I'm not the boss of the gang," she said, "but I'd like Betsy to come back and play with us." Betsy wiped her tears away and went off smiling with Sandra, her confidence completely restored.

It was my social confidence which was shaken by the Park, indeed by my whole New York experience. In my two years in the Park I had had several conversations—three, perhaps. A motherly woman had told me all about her daughter's operations. Another time, a woman who lived at the National Arts Club tried to discuss with me the parks of London. I had made the Grand Tour and spent four days in London eighteen years before, and I could not remember the parks. An eager, red-headed girl, a very newcomer, with the unmistakable voice and accent of Georgia, had wanted to tell someone how nice it was to be there: "I think we southern girls just live to grow up and get married and move to New York, don't you?" I did not, but I tried not to dampen her spirits.

There were various benches which had special associations for me. Here I had sat with Anthony Trollope and there with Oscar Wilde; I had read War and Peace opposite the knights in armor, and The Theory of the Leisure Class where I could look up at the wrought-iron galleries and the lamps of Mayor Harper's house. From a northwest corner, I had watched nostalgically while people went in and out of Calvary Church parish house, and I hoped the rector and his wife knew how lucky they were. I had even plotted a detective story of my own: the Italian well-head was a good place to find a body, and I made a long list of the bodies I would like to place there, such was my anti-social mood.

Now I was glad I had seen the madonna lilies bloom again. I wondered if Mr. Hannan thought they were appropriate too and had set them out to guard the madonnas of the Park, madonnas who were so concerned with the hours as they passed on the clock in the Edison tower. The clock moved slowly on cold days until a modern madonna wore a ski suit and started a style.

The clock in the Edison tower said five o'clock now, and Betsy sat down in the path and was patiently digging. "I'll be back in a minute, Betsy," I said. I must tell someone I was leaving. Edwin Booth, perhaps. But no, he had that perpetual faraway look in his eyes. I went up to Minerva, but as usual she was preoccupied with keeping her balance, and there was a little boy in blue overalls climbing up her back. I went back to Betsy and took her hand. With a final glance at Mr. Hannan and Edwin Booth, I put my key in the lock and pulled the gate. I set my face towards the Edison clock and New Jersey, cheered by the feeling of Betsy's hand holding tight to mine.

Beyond the Edison clock lies Essex Fells. To get there, you drive through the Holland Tunnel and through the undulating rushes of the Jersey Meadows, past Snake Hill, across the Erie tracks and over the two rivers with the noisy names, the Hackensack and the Passaic, through Arlington, Belleville, Bloomfield, Glen Ridge, Montclair, Verona, past the birthplace of Grover Cleveland, and into Caldwell, and with all this you have only come twenty miles from town. In Caldwell the road turns left at the Presbyterian Church where the elder Cleveland was pastor. In a thickly wooded section between routes 6 and 202 is Essex Fells, carefully hidden from the spreading population of New Jersey, which might otherwise engulf it.

Essex Fells had charm for us, and a welcome from the friends whom we had visited there over a period of twenty years. Here I would be any suburban housewife with a traveling husband. I would go to Parent-Teacher Meetings,

and I would shovel snow, and once a week I would go to town for a matinée. Except for the jinx, nobody would remind me of my duty as a minister's wife.

There was only one vacant house for us in Essex Fells since renters and transients were not encouraged. Standing outside of this house while the agent gave his preliminary sales talk, I counted seventeen dogwood trees on the otherwise battered lawn. The house was yellow stucco with brown trim, and the architecture was a sort of Mediterranean English: out of Elizabeth by Philip. Inside, the dark panelling in the square hall gave an air of dignity; into the circle of the big bay window in the dining-room was built a wide window garden; from it ivy might be trained around the casement, and herbs such as lemon verbena and rosemary and geranium growing there would make the house sweet with their fragrance. The big green living-room had a large fireplace framed with narrow moulded marble. The tall trees of the Fells swayed and dipped beyond the small panes of the windows. The house was just right for the five of us. But I shivered; there was something indefinable here that oppressed me. I would not take it even if it was the last house in Essex Fells.

"The price is too high," I said to the agent.

"That I think can be adjusted. The owners don't want it to remain empty any longer."

"I suppose it is nice enough, but I don't like it." Then I became firm. "I won't take it. You will have to find me something in Caldwell."

"Now you just let me talk to the owners. I know we can make an attractive price. You had better come to Essex Fells; your friends are here."

"I am sure there is no use, they will never bring it down to my price." I hoped I had discouraged him. I would not live in that house. Everything in me rebelled. There would be other houses in neighboring suburbs.

I was curious about it and I asked my friends.

"It is an unhappy house and I haven't just imagined it; it has a bad personal atmosphere and you don't have to be psychic to know it. I am not psychic."

"You might as well know, and move in with your eyes

open; there is supposed to be a jinx on the house."

"I knew it! I knew it! But what happened there?"

"Suicide, insanity, husbands who threw things at wives and wives who threw things back at husbands. Didn't you see the spots on the walls? Everything short of murder," they told me cheerfully. "But you aren't silly enough to let a jinx keep you out of a good house like that. That is one of the best built houses in Essex Fells, and no corners were cut, no money spared in building it."

"What could I do to counteract such a sinister personal

atmosphere?"

"If the clergy can't break a jinx, who can?"

The agent came back with a new price which would fit a ministerial pocketbook.

"I don't want that house at any price," I said to him. "I won't live in a house with a jinx on it."

"All right, look at it this way. The Prudential Life Insurance Company owns the house, and knows there is a jinx on it, and the Prudential wants you to break the jinx. Now you take it as a challenge. They think a clergyman's family can break the jinx, and you won't find another house as good as this at such low rent anywhere."

With many misgivings on my part, we accepted the challenge. Those who have studied the subject say that just as a personal atmosphere can be changed for the worse, so it can be changed for the better. We moved in, and for a while I waited fearfully, but nothing dramatic happened to us. At

first I was conscious of nagging difficulties and inconveniences, but I might have forgotten the jinx until it brought me Pearl.

Pearl was my first experience since Texas with an inefficient colored maid. She had come from Cuckoo, Virginia, to become a singer and to cut a swathe in metropolitan society, and she used my kitchen and the Church of God in Caldwell as her bases of operations. She was plump and the color of mocha. Her Holy Roller meetings lasted all night, and she took my directions in the daytime with a sleepy blink of her heavy-lidded, black-fringed eyes. My ice box held her corsages, and she practiced her lyrics on Sherry's piano whenever I left the house. The children reported to me on her singing: "O-o-o-h, Mommy, she sings the drippiest songs! And when you aren't here she wears a gold crown."

The General Convention was meeting in Kansas City. Sherry was there, and Bome sent me a wire: "All my rectors and their wives are here except you. Have arranged for you to fly out for the weekend." With the wire in my hand, I went to the kitchen to take another look at Pearl and see if I might leave my household. She was ironing, and she wore a gold paper crown on which was the inscription "Bride of the Lamb."

After she left, I learned to cook and to wash and iron, and the jinx became firmly established as a member of the family.

Then one night we came back from a trip, to the house which had been closed up tight for two weeks. I entered with my sense of foreboding, and made my usual tour of investigation. In the bath tub I found it: an evil black creature with a tail and cloven hoofs, with the head of a mouse and ears like horns, the most revolting little animal that lives, a bat. Only this one was dead. The dampers were closed in the fireplaces, and there was no way for it to have

gotten into the house. I called Sherry and showed it to him.

"The evil spirit," I said.

"And it's good and dead," he replied, playing up to my whimsy. "Now are you convinced that we can bring enough of God to break a jinx and change a heathen atmosphere?"

When we became established as residents of Essex Fells. I was surprised to find with what impatience I waited for the rector of the local church to call on me. I forgot how often I had been irritated by women who complained that Dr. Sheerin was not much of a caller: instead I wondered if I were going to be neglected. The Welcome Wagon came, and the Welcome Woman sat in the living-room and paid me a visit. She brought a loaf of bread and a bottle of milk, two tickets to the Caldwell movie, and two more tickets for luncheons at Kresge's Department Store in Newark, a week's subscription to both the New York Times and the Herald Tribune, and an invitation to have a free shampoo and wave at the Caldwell Beauty Parlour. It was good advertising, and Sherry was impressed when he heard it. He made up his mind to tell the clergymen over the country to get on the Welcome Wagon.

When the rector came to call, I was full of sympathy for him, for by that time I had learned that his job in this secularized community was a hard one. Essex Fells was a moral community, with a minimum of scandals and divorces, but most of its citizens had achieved worldly success without God, and they would continue to take care of themselves without bothering the Almighty.

Our non-churchgoing friends and neighbors were cordial and hospitable, and invited us to their parties. I was no Oxford Grouper out to convert them, and it was with no high purpose that I prodded the pleasant pagans whom I met.

"I have a creed," one of them told me. "It is: Honesty is

the Best Policy. I have come a long way on that, in fact I don't want to brag, but I have done well, and I started from scratch. The church has nothing for me."

"You are honest because honesty has a cash value?"
"It has."

"You wouldn't be honest because you have a moral responsibility to your fellow man?"

"There are individuals for whom I am responsible, and to whose upkeep I am fortunate enough to be able to contribute. You can't worry too much about your fellow man. It cuts down your efficiency. My corporation has told the men in it that they must not work on the Community Fund campaigns in their little suburbs, such as New Canaan and Greenwich and Stamford. They have only so much vitality, and it must be spent for the corporation."

"You feel no obligation to God as God, quite apart from asking and receiving? What a superb ego you have. But even you must worship a god, only you call it the corporation. 'There is no God but Consolidated Cash, and him only must I worship!' "We smiled and parted.

While Sherry traveled all over the country for the National Council, the responsibility of the children rested heavily on me. Maria and Betsy quite naturally gravitated to the church, and the suitable activities which it offered to them. When Charlie came home from school for his vacations, Sherry would be in Seattle or New Orleans or Salt Lake City, and Charlie was thinking of a profession, and needed to discuss it with him. For years Charlie had said that he was going to be a lawyer like his grandfather, and then he could live in Richmond and never move; but living always where the church counted most was beginning to have its effect. My father never talked law at home, but the church was an engrossing topic for conversation. Charlie had never known

anything but the best in the ministry. His Grandfather Sheerin was a clergyman who had an absorbing interest in the church, and a way with children; he was a clever and entertaining Irishman. The attractive young curates in Chattanooga had made a companion of Charlie, and at Groton he had been influenced by Dr. Peabody, "The Rector," by my brother John Williams, who was the chaplain there, and subsequently by the new headmaster, John Crocker. These associations had their effect, and he was beginning to direct his studies with the idea of becoming a clergyman.

This pleased me, because I knew that if I were a man, I could ask for no greater success than to have my son choose my profession. I did not want to get sentimental about this decision of Charlie's; I wanted a realistic picture of the church, and no one could give me a better one than Sherry. I wrote to him:

"Sherry, my dear, now that Charlie thinks that in spite of the frequent uprootings which have been especially tragic for him and for me, he may go into the ministry, we are committed to the church probably for generations to come. You have visited every corner of it; do write me your estimate of it."

And he answered from the Hotel Hermitage in Nashville: "... you asked for it, so you've got to take it. 'The American Church Through a Cockpit,' we'll call it. Possibly after the excitement of the plane ride from Dallas to Nashville, I won't do so well—I'm always excited about plane rides, you know. Captain Eddie Rickenbacker was a fellow passenger on this last trip, and I am more puzzled by why all the pilots are thin in America, and Goering is fat in Germany than I am by 'Why the Church.'

"Through a cockpit you have several views: one is a cockeyed or shall I say cock-pitted view. It is of poor things in round collars, beaten by small salaries, discouraged by indifference. They probably should never have been allowed in the ministry. Success in the church is so often like other success, it is worldly, and the trick of personality is so over-rewarded. Why is it that A and B go to the same seminary, have the same scholarship and use the same prayer book, and yet one is a stuff-shirted success, and the other is a forlorn man in a rubber collar? Beaten men cannot make the church effective. I am optimistic. Let's renovate them—surely some will take to the renovation.

"Like all professions bidding for public favor, the clergy are jealous. Actors are better in one respect, for they are sentimental over failures. The clergy seem to like other clergy to fail. Why? I had rather be a dishonored broker than a dishonest priest. Maybe the fall is greater, but maybe it is because we are all failures, and the other's admitted failure makes us forget our own. The better exceptions are those with a sense of humor. I have never seen a man with a sense of humor be a permanent failure.

"After all, the clergy reflect what the people, who are the church, put into the ministry. One transformation we are going through now is the last bad inheritance from England which is passing away—the idea of preferment. It is still with us and will probably continue in my lifetime. Only when it dies will the man who has had no preferment overcome the devils inside which gnaw constantly at the faith and spirit which he tries to possess.

"This cock-pitted view is not fair. I have forgotten those real men who have had no preferment, but who are humble about it. I have forgotten those miracles who run little missions and who love them and the people and who want nothing more than a good hard job. I'd better take a clearer view.

"The laymen are a clearer view. We have wonderful laymen in this church of ours. I think they will save us. We

haven't many intellectuals. Once in a while I have met at various gatherings the philosophy professor. Good writers who are always telling the church what to do are not at the meetings I attend. There are more men of science than writers or philosophers. Most laymen are just good, honest, hard-working, practical businessmen, full of multitudinous sins, but wanting to do better. Working men are few, but they are jewels when they are present.

"Our laymen are more interested in their children than in themselves. They do not like missions until you point out that missions may make a better world for their children. They cannot see clearly why you don't believe in clapping communists in jail, and yet despise communist philosophy. The greatest sin to them is money guilt-money is sacred. They will protect a homosexual clergyman and cast out one who absconds with funds. Maybe sex is a greater mystery to them than money. I think they understand the temptation of money better and its corrupting influence. They are easily fooled by fanfare, and above the age of forty they fall for florid oratory. That explains, with our vestry system, why so many bluffs gets the plum pulpits. They like jokes about themselves, but don't appreciate fun poked at bishops: reform is badly needed here. They can only take theology when translated into ABC's. If I have any success it is because I like ABC theology also.

"The women are better organized, but not as fine as the laymen. That is because of their leaders who are very noisy, and I often suspect their religion is an over-sublimation of sex, rather than spirit. The chief layman is apt to convey the impression that he has a very happy home and sex life. The chief laywoman too often seems the opposite. There are notable exceptions.

"Is the church just wistful thinking? I'm eccentric on that. Everything is wistful thinking and wishful thinking. There are empty wishes and real wishes. The question is whether the church is the real or the empty.

"It all depends on whether there is a God. I know He could work without the church, and does, but I know (for-give the dogmatism) that He works with and in the church, and that is the normal way.

"Spiritual values must be intangible, or they wouldn't be spiritual, but we have enough tangibles to prove the spiritual. It is only when the priest, the layman or laywoman looks for the tangibles that we see the end of miracles and transfigurations. It is only the career clergyman who is disappointed and beaten. It is only the show-off who does not grow as woman's auxiliary president. But where any soul says to God, 'Take my life,' a miracle occurs. I have been strangely peaceful since I finally decided that God must control my life, and to trust Him. I have had lapses, but the peace comes back. I know (though I can't put it into words) that God says in spite of us poor clergy, You have got to make my church real.' You do get success. This morning a layman (I hate to say a rich layman) told the rector that if I cost anything to bring to his town, he must pay for it, for I had transformed his life. I had not. It was the real wish that I could do so, made real.

"I am a fake in lots of ways. I have learned to flatter bishops. They are strangely sad creatures, and a beaten bishop is worse than a beaten clergyman. A successful bishop is too apt to learn the art of giving pain, and he loses something. Our bishops at times have to compromise, but I think their compromises are justified. John the Baptist did not compromise. Our Lord accepted the universe in which He lived, and yet He changed it. John the Baptist changed nothing. And so the fanatical priest, be he Oxford Group, Anglo-Catholic, Neo-Orthodox, ploughs the ground for more sensitive but firmer spirits to reap the harvest.

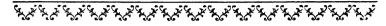
"Without the church, I see nothing to promote real international fellowship. The church is all I see that can demand justice with peace—that was our mistake before, we learned to hate war, we wanted it over regardless of the price of peace without justice.

"I have found a real ministry in this job in spite of the terror of it, and the hatefulness of separation from you and Betsy and Ria and Charlie. And I believe in the church

more forcefully than ever.

"The church is in transformation. The automobile, the modern philosophies and sciences, the wars and economic upheavals, have all weakened people's old ties and we must find new ones. St. Stephen's in the suburbs must replace St. Paul's on the Square. Upperville must be more than a simple rural parish, and the Holy Rollers, Baptists, and Methodists and Roman Catholics must not be the only ones to reach the poor. Maybe we shall all be poor after this war, and that will be harder on the Episcopal Church than on the others, for we have been geared to the rich. It is discouraging, hard, and yet terribly interesting and adventurous to be the boy who was born in 1897, because the leadership now belongs to my generation.

"I have probably written what I wouldn't write tomorrow. . . ."



WASHINGTON

9

SHERRY NEVER considered it fair to a church or to a diocese to lead a committee on to offer jobs which he did not expect to accept, although sometimes that would have been fun. Are we not all a little like girls counting proposals? While he was with the National Council, he had several flattering calls, but as usual without shilly-shallying he made an immediate decision. Twice he was clever about it. He said to me:

"You hate this job I have so much, suppose you accept or decline this call!" And I wrote the answers.

Then one clear December day, he flew in from Denver with a telegram from the Church of the Epiphany in Washington. It was time for him to stop being an expert on propaganda and publicity. Propaganda and publicity can lose their spontaneity and become a business routine; drawing together the National Council and the parishes can become mechanical when it is done too long by one person. After a while Sherry would no longer be the rector who knew the need of each for the other; he would become the salesman of the National Council, and this must not happen. The Church of the Epiphany had a history of a hundred years of service and inspiration in its community; its future could be bright, and it seemed right to accept the challenge.

"You should play hard-to-get, I think," I told him. "Take a long time to decide. It is good for a church to be without a

rector; it puts a vestry on its mettle and they learn more about a church than a rector ever teaches them."

"Now what's the sense of that? I never take long to decide. And I'd rather like to have the rector announce me before he leaves. Think how effectively he could do it. Besides you wouldn't want St. John's Church to pick up any Epiphany parishioners in the interim, would you?"

"I must see the rectory first."

"Go down to Washington and take a look at it."

This I did, and the sight of it sent me shivering home to write to the Senior Warden:

"... it would be unethical for the Sheerin family to live in that minor embassy you own on R Street. It calls for butlers and brocade and you have called a good preacher but a poor man. Besides Sherry's salary I have an income of six dollars a year. Please help us to find a more appropriate house."

The Senior Warden answered that in Washington these days one was lucky to have any kind of a house, and that was that.

I have a fear of big and imposing houses which amounts to a psychosis. I have seen what has happened in my own family too often.

"You Williamses—you have to have big houses to live in, even if you haven't two extra pennies in your pocket!" a friend of mine had said to me years ago.

"We have such big families," was my defense.

"Two damn good reasons for not marrying you, my Pretty Maid."

I had not asked him, but I had seen big houses get the whip hand to the discomfort of their owners. Now I saw quite clearly that any economic margin would be eaten up in this rectory, and the prospect made me unhappy. My mis-

givings were somewhat alleviated by the enthusiasm of my friends.

"What fun to be moving to Washington. You will be right where things are happening, and think of the interesting people there! You will meet just everybody."

We moved to Washington with that gleam in our eyes which I learned to recognize in other people whom I watched come to Washington later; it is the gleam of a lion hunter arriving in Africa.

Snow was falling on Essex Fells and big, soft flakes were clinging to the evergreens when we drove away from the house we were leaving without a jinx. It was hard to leave our beautiful suburb when it looked its wintry loveliest, but as we drove on to Washington, I felt a thrill of anticipation.

The next day when our journey ended, we tumbled out of the car expectantly to take possession of our new home. The vans had not come, and after a house tour, we sat on the window seats in the drawing-room and looked over the expanse of empty floors.

"I miss something, Sherry," I said.

"Sure, everything," he answered unimaginatively.

"No, I think I miss Bome Patten and Fan Davis."

The doorbell rang and echoed in the emptiness. On the doorstep stood a parishioner. "This is something like it!" I thought to myself.

"I was just going by," she said, "and I saw a car with a New Jersey license and I thought it must be you, so I stopped in to say hello. No, I won't stay. By the way, if you have not had lunch, there is a nice drugstore on the corner."

When she had gone, I looked at Sherry for sympathy. Where was the Rector's Warden? There would be no wetnurse for us in Washington, and psychiatrists say that the weaning of the infant is one of the major crises of life. We were weaned.

I would have to make the most of the rectory, and I mapped out a five-year plan for getting it under cultivation. It was a pretty house, and it would respond to attempts at decoration, but because of its formal style, the attempts would have to be expensive ones. It was most strategically placed to impress my provincial friends. There were four legations in the space of a block, and we shared a dilapidated back fence with an Embassy.

My predecessor in the rectory had come into the ministry well-endowed. She had been queen of the New Orleans Mardi Gras, and a queen is always a queen. She was Juno and Candida, and life on R Street was no problem to her. She could not have been sweeter to me, and, like everyone else who knew her, I came to have the greatest admiration and love for her and to consider her the perfect parson's wife. She did everything she could to make things easy and pleasant for us, but she over-estimated my social gifts.

"I am leaving a table top in the basement for you, my dear, for dinner parties, you know," she said. "It seats twenty-four quite comfortably. By the way, I don't know how you and your husband feel about it, but when entertaining embassies, we have felt that we should let down the bars a little and serve wine. Incidentally, you must persuade the Ambassador to coöperate on a new back fence."

It sounded glamorous, and I could not wait to entertain ambassadors and serve wine to my twenty-four seated guests. I would have a dinner party soon and the Ambassador would have plenty of Chateau Yquem, and I was sure he would give me anything. I would be wearing Great-grand-mother's diamonds, and I would mention the back fence.

I waited and waited and nothing happened, and I still could not tell which was the Ambassador and which the major-domo. Of course they might all have been major-domos. The Ambassador probably did not use the back door.

Then one day I saw Maria and Betsy playing hop-scotch with a little girl in the courtyard of the Embassy. That was the way, of course. How nice to have children. What lovely friends they had always made for me. I went running down-stairs to tell Sherry that wasn't it nice, the Ambassador had a little girl just Maria's age. "Only—only, well, how do you suppose he got such a blonde little girl? They sometimes are blonde, aren't they?" I asked hopefully.

Once more I saw myself in Great-grandmother's diamonds discussing back fences with the Ambassador. I would bring the sextons up from the church and they could stand behind the Ambassador's chair.

Maria came in and I greeted her affectionately.

"What a blonde little girl you were playing with, my dear, for such a brunette Embassy."

"That was the cook's child, Mother; she is Austrian."

Oh, well, I thought to myself, people have gone in the back door and come out the front. The Ambassador might have a daughter. I went down to the basement to take another look at the table top. Two cloths would cover it. Should I have them dyed a soft shade of green, or should I use them white?

Some days later Maria was late coming home and I was worried about it. I was looking through the telephone book for the Missing Persons Bureau, just in case, when she came bursting in with Frieda, the Austrian, trailing behind. Frieda wore jewelled earrings in the pierced lobes of her ears, and a bunch of flowers in her hair drooped rakishly over one eye. Her skirt was a gay dirndl, and except that her wide peasant face was made up in the best American tradition, she looked very fresh from Austria.

"We've been to the movies, Mother," Maria said, and her eyes were shining. As soon as Frieda left, I said to her crossly: "You know perfectly well that you are not allowed to go to the movies without a grown person. Washington is not like Essex Fells. I have tried to explain. And with Frieda!"

"But Daddy said we could go. At least, after we had asked him and asked him, he said, 'I don't care where you go as long as you get out of here.' I think he was writing a sermon, Mother, and that's what he said, so we went." Then in a moment she added, "We got called to the management."

"You did wh-what?"

"You see, it was this way, the management said there was a policewoman there who saw a man annoying young girls, and she saw this man sit down by us—he sat by Frieda, Mother. The management said did he annoy us, but we said he hadn't. He did sort of rub Frieda's leg all through the movie, but Frieda said she didn't mind."

This was a case for the church to handle. I took two aspirin and went to lie down in a darkened room. I could not relax. The mother of Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy came to haunt me. "Marmee" would have taken that little peasant to her bosom and made a daughter of her. Louisa May Alcott was no snob. "Rose in Bloom" had adopted Phoebe, the hired girl, as a sister, and married her off to one of the handsome and cultured "Eight Cousins." Then I had a thought which horrified me: Charlie was coming home from Groton in a few days for his spring vacation. I wished fervently I had never heard of Louisa May Alcott.

I have a lot to talk to the Ambassador about when he comes to dinner, but years have passed and I still do not know what he looks like. We have had a call from one of our glamorous neighbors. A handsome, tweedy gentleman, who retired from the foreign service to walk dogs, came one night. I greeted him cordially, and then I realized that it was not a social call. He handed me a jumping rope and told me curtly

that jails were made for children who tied jumping ropes across sidewalks to trip him up.

The table top is warping in the basement; our social life has not required it yet. As for the back fence, the Ambassador and I are both southerners and shabby fences do not really worry us.

The rector's pew in the Church of the Epiphany is near the front on the pulpit side and well-placed for signals, but I never had the courage to suggest to Sherry that if he would look at me, I could let him know if he had preached too long, or was saying things he should not say. He never looked at me; he would not have known if I were not there. Sometimes when I have thought the pulpit clock had stopped, I have pushed a whole pile of hymnals in a cascade to the floor, or I have taken out a handkerchief and gone into a paroxysm of coughing, and been invariable ignored. He liked to use the family as illustrations for his points, and this was always embarrassing to Charlie and to me. The girls liked being used as illustrations.

Soon after we arrived in Washington Sherry announced the confirmation class. I heard him say, "Someone has asked me how much of a confirmation class have you gotten this year?' and I said 'I have my daughter and her friend, how much of a class have you gotten? . . . '"

I looked at twelve-year-old Maria, and she was gazing at her father with a rapt expression, and there was a new light on her pretty face. This was going to be a great experience for her, I could see that.

When Palm Sunday came, it brought the heaviest snowfall of the season; it was no day for a white dress, and Maria was disappointed. Our car was caught inextricably in a snowdrift, and the street cars were not running. We ploughed through the unswept sidewalks and arrived at church while the chimes were ringing.

The service progressed, and the traditional confirmation hymn, "O Jesus, I have promised," which has taken us all to the altar rail, was being sung for Maria. She took off her coat and hat and started up the aisle, and I noticed for the first time that she was wearing a gold cross on a chain at her neck. Protestants from Ireland and Virginia do not wear crosses, and I was a little surprised. But I abandoned myself to the emotion of the moment, to the sense of being what Spengler called a "series and not a term"; I thought with reverence of all the Marias behind us.

At the luncheon table I asked Maria who had given her the cross.

"I bought it yesterday," she answered.

"You had very little money yesterday."

"It didn't cost much; I got it at the Five and Ten."

We did not discuss it further, but she wore the cross every day. My mother came for a visit and was impressed with Maria's cross, and commended me for giving it to her since it seemed to mean so much.

"I didn't. She bought it at the Five and Ten." Mother was horrified; her line changed entirely.

"You aren't letting her wear a brass ten-cent cross!"

"Do you think it is sacrilegious?"

"I think she will get blood poisoning!" she said. When Maria came home from school that day, her grandmother had a gold cross ready for her. Maria put it on and wore it night and day straight through the spring. On a morning late in May, Maria came down to breakfast and the cross was gone. In its place dangled a rabbit's foot. She saw us staring at it questioningly.

"It's just for this week while I have exams," she said, caressing it. "It's guaranteed to be a left hind foot, a paper

came with it that said so, and the rabbit was killed by a cross-eyed man in a graveyard on the dark of the moon. And you needn't worry about blood poisoning. I have been saving my allowance and I bought it at a big jewelry store—or rather in the jewelry department of a drugstore, and that should make it safe, shouldn't it?" She went blithely and confidently off to school, leaving me to wonder when Sherry would preach a sermon on rabbits' feet.

Every clergyman in the diocese, and several outside of the diocese became suddenly solicitous of the Bishop's health. It was failing rapidly, and in electing a new bishop, as clergymen will all tell you, anything might happen.

The office of bishop is supposed to crown a clergyman's career. It means that he has arrived, and from then on he is secure. The most successful clergyman might wake up any day and feel his parish crumbling under his feet, and can do nothing after a certain age but slip with it. A bishop must commit a heinous crime to lose the awe and reverence of the laymen. Even the low church bishops wear impressively complicated vestments, and the garb of a high churchman would make the eyes of the first bishop pop out of his head. I like to think of Peter wearing fluted cuffs put on with black bands; they would make even a fisherman's hands look pretty and graceful, and Peter would find himself gesturing as never before. The gentlemen of the press consider a bishop good copy; and he never makes a simple statement, but a Godly Judgment. In electing a bishop, it is the custom to consider seriously what a man will do for the office; it is not often that much thought is given to what the office will do to a man.

The glamour of the office sustains a realistic man for about one year, my friends who are bishops have told me, and then it wears off, and he is faced with a gruelling job which he has come to as a rule when he is past middle life. He must travel unceasingly over the same ground. His hours, his diet, his billetting is not always comfortable, and he cannot escape for a moment from the pressure of people. He must remember each one of them, and he must feel a special kinship with them if they have a cousin, or uncle, or brother who is a bishop, too. He is their Father in God, and they are pathetically pleased by a smile or a kind word from the bishop.

The Diocese of Washington is one of the few dioceses where the bishop can make his visitations and always be home at night. I estimated that the prestige which the dying Bishop had acquired should last at least two years. Therefore, many clergymen were interested in the Bishop's health. It was an open contest, and no holds barred, and I decided to run for bishop. There were several phases of the job which appealed to me, and besides I thought it was time I helped Sherry's career and stopped being just an interested bystander.

I like cycles, and they so seldom happen. Many years ago I went to school on Mount St. Alban where the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul is being built. The school for girls, which was placed in the Close, was designed to make good church women of us, but two obstacles stood in the way. One was the lack of sympathy between the girls of the school and the staff of the Cathedral: the canons, the Dean and the Bishop. The other reason was the school hymn which we sang several times a week:

"Lord, thy daughters pray thee, Make us one and all Like the polished corners Of thy temple wall . . ."

It was a fate too grim to contemplate.

I thought it might be interesting to live on the hill in

some capacity more important than being a school girl, and I might be able to subvert this psychopathic desire to be a polished corner. It would be worth a try.

The Bishop's House had been out of bounds to us in 1921. It is across the lawn from the Phoebe Hearst Memorial, where we were housed, and it had an air of mystery. Built of smooth gray stone, its style of architecture was not unlike that of 281 Fourth Avenue. A high thorn hedge hid the front door, and a high stone wall enclosed the garden, and anything might have been concealed there: a sleeping beauty, an enchanted prince, or Mrs. Edward Rochester. In those days I would have settled for nothing less.

The galleries across the back of the Bishop's House look down on Washington, and magnolia trees bloom in the garden. When I moved in, I would have a green living-room, and a bowl of magnolias on the piano. I had not had real magnolias since we left Richmond. There during the month of June, the green blinds would be shut against the midday sun, and magnolias shed their cool fragrance from the mantel, because I turned a deaf ear to the cook who begged me to "let her throw them stinking white things out."

Yes, the job had its points. Sherry must not know, but I mapped out my campaign. Of course I would have to be subtle about it. I would not plan a schedule for inviting strategic men to dinner, and either serving them the best vintage wine or appearing ardent teetotaler, as the case required. First, I would be especially gracious to all the clergy wives so that they would go home and tell their husbands what a "nice woman that new Mrs. Sheerin is." This would be easy because I liked clergy wives and had a naïve feeling that we should all be congenial since we had so much in common.

Then I would do some personal and individual work. I met the Reverend Mr. Brattle at a tea party, and Sherry was

not there, which made it a good place to start. Mr. Brattle had wide ears and a narrow mouth and a mother. His mother was the key to the situation, she had given Mr. Brattle to God as a reward for bringing him through a fragile infancy to a precarious manhood. That gave us something in common, since my mother had pulled a fast one on me, and here I was in the church. Besides that, I had always wanted to be a *femme fatale*, but the Lord had not seen fit to equip me, now I would see what a little extra attentiveness to Mr. Brattle would do to further Sherry's political career. It should at least be good for a vote.

I had walked a long way to get to the tea party, and my first success came when Mr. Brattle asked if he could drive me home.

"Let's ride home the long way through the Zoo," he said, with what I hoped was a leer.

"Do let's, I love yaks," I said. We got into his car which looked rather jerry built, and I wondered how it had passed inspection. We started off at a good clip.

"I save gas this way," he explained. "Dash up to the top of the hill and coast down; that's my motto these days."

"Don't you think that's a little dangerous in traffic?"

"Oh, no! I've been driving for years and only had three accidents—knock on wood." He coyly tapped his head, and then, reaching the crest of the hill, he cut off his gas and we went shooting down into the Zoo.

"Do you always drive on the left side of the road?" I asked a little breathlessly.

"No traffic here this time of day," he answered cavalierly. With that he proceeded crazily to take a curve, still coasting. I had been trained early not to call attention to possible collisions; if the driver lives, he resents your interference. Now a car loomed and a crash seemed inevitable, but Mr. Brattle was equal to the occasion. With creaking brakes he

skidded to a stop, he was at right angles to the road, and only two wheels were in the ditch.

"There, you see!" he said triumphantly.

"You are a remarkable driver," I assured him truthfully. "I have enjoyed the ride; it was most exciting. Now I will just get out at the light on Connecticut Avenue and do a little shopping. Thank you so much for bringing me through the Zoo." I was pleased with my improvisation. "It was stupid of me to forget that I need some things from the grocery store."

"But you said—" began Mr. Brattle, and then the light turned red. I got quickly and firmly out of the car.

"Good-by, Mr. Brattle!"

I hurried into a crowded store until Mr. Brattle had careened out of sight, carrying his vote with him. Then I climbed aboard a bus and grabbed a strap in comparative safety.

The Reverend Mr. Judson was a very old man himself, but a political power in the diocese, and I was pleased when he and his wife came to call. I was pleased, too, that Sherry was not at home; I could do better with the field to myself. I led the conversation onto the subject of clerical novels, and I asked them if they liked Trollope and Susan Goodyear and Hugh Walpole as much as I did. I told them how much Sherry and I loved the clergy as a class, and how easy Sherry is to work with. I asked them if they had enjoyed the ministry as much as I had, and then I became confidential.

"Such exciting things happen, don't they?" I said leaning forward enthusiastically. "Did you ever have an illegitimate child, Mr. Judson?"

They seemed to congeal at that, and left soon after, and quite a block of votes went with them.

Then I had another bright idea. I would return some calls. Only a campaign could possibly bring me to that decision, but I took a nice sunny afternoon, as Mary Temple had

taught me, and a list of the clergy who had called on us. It was not hard, since every one whose door bell I rang was out. That night I could not resist showing Sherry an impressive list of the calls I had made.

"What on earth brought you to do anything so out of character?"

"All for votes, Sherry, I haven't told you before, but I am running for bishop."

"Good Lord, you don't really want that job!"

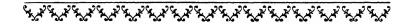
"Yes," I said. "It's the Bishop's Garden—not the public one, the private one. I wonder if it has a mint bed. I can give garden parties and wear a big floppy hat with pink roses on it. You can't wear a big floppy hat on R street."

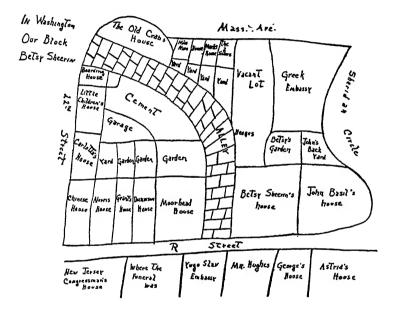
"No, I can't. But you can wear one at Hyannis Port."

"I tried it, don't you remember, last summer, and it blew off."

"Then take the hat money and go out and get drunk—you'll never be a bishop's wife. I might add that there is not a canonical resident of the diocese on your list. In other words, the votes did not call on us." He did not know about the Reverend Mr. Judson and his wife.

"Oh dear! I'll never get out of bounds," I remarked rather obscurely. "And I would have made such a nice Mrs. Proudie. Good night, Dr. Grantly."





THE MAP NEEDS a little explanation. Children who are nine and ten years old like to draw maps, and usually there is a cross where the body was found, or where the treasure was hidden. Besides that, in that particular Year of Our Lord, there were maps everywhere. We had two large ones in our living-room with little white flags stuck into them for each member of our family in the armed forces, and the little white flags were moved around following, as nearly as we

could determine, their military operations. It was natural that Betsy should draw a map of our block.

On the map, the big house next door to us really belonged to Anita Ritter and John Basil's father was the butler with the kind, gentle face and the German accent who opened the door for us when we went to Anita's parties for Moral Rearmament. Directly across the street lived Mr. Charles Evans Hughes, and next to Mr. Hughes was George, a butler who liked children. George could usually tell me where Betsy was when I went out frantically looking for her. The Old Crab around the corner was a nice lady who, unfortunately for her, let it be known that she did not like to have little children ring her doorbell and run. There are some distortions, but all for the best. "Betsy's Garden," for instance, existed only in Betsy's imagination, since the square of concrete behind our house was hardly big enough for clothes lines. Most of the houses had no children in them. but two Roman Catholic families on the block made up for the others, and Betsy belonged to quite a gang.

It was these Roman Catholic families and the Institute of Chinese Culture which caused my left-handed Irishman some concern. Then as suddenly as she had become converted to the Roman Church, Betsy broke with it, and Sherry relaxed.

"I think I shall be a Num," said Betsy. "Carlotta and Sherra are both going to be Nums, and the Institute of Chinese Culture has invited us to tea with the Poke next Sunday afternoon, and they say I can kiss his ring. Carlotta says Jesus is at her church, right there on the altar every Sunday, and he couldn't possibly get to Epiphany too. She says God and Jesus are Catholics, and I said they were Jews before they got to be Episcopalians. They were, weren't they, Daddy?" It was evident that Betsy had been shaken in her Protestantism.

The Institute of Chinese Culture was a club for Chinese young men who were Roman Catholic. They had bought the house on the corner and moved into our carefully zoned neighborhood over the protests of the Mooreheads and the Dickensons and the Grants. We would not join them in trying to keep the sale from going through, because we would have sold the rectory to the Institute of Chinese Culture, or the Moors or the Haitians or any one else who had made us an offer. Then the young Chinese, with the zest of the converted, made overtures to Betsy and the Gang, inviting them in to tea, and to listen to Chinese music, and to look at their paintings of Chinese madonnas. Sherry found two candles and a cross set up on Betsy's bookcase, and he wished he had protested with the rest of our Protestant neighbors while there was still time.

Because she was an Episcopalian, Betsy was being made to feel decidedly underworld, but she was offered a way out: she, too, could become a Roman Catholic. While the process of bringing Betsy into the true church was in progress, she was allowed to share its pleasures. She went regularly to the Institute of Chinese Culture on Sunday afternoons when they held open house, and she was given just as many cookies as the Romanists were given. She was even allowed to kiss the ring of the Papal Delegate, and to her dazzled eyes he was as good as the Poke any day. On that important afternoon I thought I had really lost her. The street lights were on before she came home, and even George could not tell me where she was.

Then the Institute of Chinese Culture decided to really get rotogravure: they planned a tea for General Patrick Hurley, himself. He was home from China on a visit.

Betsy and the Gang were roller skating on the sidewalk, and one of the young Chinese was sweeping the front. We all knew that the Chinese had had a disagreement with Old Bill, who swept sidewalks for most of us, and we also knew, thanks to the Gang, that Old Bill thought it served the Chinese right when the biggest snow of the winter fell soon after, and the young Chinese proved themselves unenthusiastic street cleaners. Now the young man was sweeping and talking to the children. Betsy came home with her eyes shining.

"The Chinese are having a party for General Hurley next Sunday, and we have all been invited. I can go, can't I?"

"Oh, sure!" I said, and forgot about it.

I still do not like Sunday afternoons. Now they seem to point up more clearly than any other time in my life, the passage of the years. For so many years they had been the time I nursed and Sherry slept. Now with a shock I realized there was no child to nurse. The afternoon was mine. The youngest child could go out to tea parties, Maria was at boarding school, and Charlie was in the army, and I was lonely.

While I was brooding on this, there came a racket at the front door and the Gang surged in, but it was an unfamiliar Gang. They had discarded their play clothes. John Basil wore long pants with a cutting crease in them; Mark had on his Sunday suit and on his chest was a nice mixture of German and American decorations; Paulus, who only spoke in Greek or gestures, was bright from soap and water; Sherra wore a white fur coat and a white fur hat; Astrid, whose mother was housekeeper at the Swedish legation, wore her hair in long, yellow braids, and her strong little Viking face shone above her American Sunday coat. Carlotta's mother was Spanish, and Carlotta had inherited a dark beauty; it pleased my brothers to say that Betsy was "as Irish as Paddy's pig." This was a cosmopolitan little group.

"I've come to get dressed," said Betsy.

"Not now, for goodness sake. It's time to come in for supper."

"But we are going to the reception—you know—for General Hurley at the Institute of Chinese Culture. And I am going up to put on my dancing-school dress and my black velvet coat." Betsy's black velvet coat had been bought by Winifred McAllester for her daughter Ewing, and then it had been sent to Maria, and now it was Betsy's. It had a white fur collar and silver buttons, and it was just the thing to delight the heart of a ten-year-old. Betsy felt like a princess in it, although the sleeves were a little short for her, and the shoulders a little tight, and the length left an inch or two to be desired.

The little group went off in an ecstasy of anticipation. I had not been invited, and I could not follow them, but after a while I had the picture pieced together. The door had opened for the children, and they trooped into the brightly lighted house. The drawing-rooms were already crowded with chattering women, flowered hats nodding on their heads, and with courteous Chinese, perpetually smiling and bowing. When the door shut behind the children, conversation was suspended in mid-air for the space of a gasp. Then one large woman detached herself and hurried over to the little group. In a harsh whisper, behind her hand (Betsy was graphic about the gesture), she said, "You horrid brats! Who let you in? Why have you come? Go upstairs this instant and don't you dare make a sound!" It would have been much more efficient and kinder if she had sent them home, but I suppose she was afraid they would encounter the General on the doorstep.

The children went upstairs, bewildered and chagrined. Halfway up John stopped and called after the woman in his high, always excited voice, "But we were invited! I tell you we were invited!" They went into a room, "I think it was

the Bishop's room," said Betsy, and they sat around afraid to breathe. "Only I sat on the radiator, and tried to hide behind the curtain, and the curtain came down on my head," said Betsy, tearfully. "She was trying to wipe her eyes on the curtain," said John, "and that's why it came down." Every now and then John sneaked to the top of the steps and looked down to see if the way was clear to the door. At last it was, the Gorgon was nowhere to be seen. John gave his orders:

"Hsst! Gang! The bell just rang. The door will be opened, when the people come in, make a dash for it!" The children flew wildly down the steps, and out of the door, but not before the Gorgon saw them. "You dreadful children! Don't you dare ever to come back!" she hissed after them.

Once in the street, the Gang separated. Betsy came home sobbing. Even the black velvet coat with the white fur collar and the silver buttons could not help her now. It drooped off her shoulders.

"I hate them!" she said. "I hate those old Chinese!"

"Was the woman who sent you upstairs a Chinese?" I asked, feeling my responsibility for international relations.

"No! She was a Catholic! I hate them worse! I won't ever join their old church! Jesus is just as much an Episcopalian, isn't he, Mother?"

It had been a hard experience for Betsy, but to Sherry it had a silver lining. Church unity and racial understanding really begin or end in back yards, and on roller skates, I thought to myself. When will we realize it?

The Men's Club had gathered in the Parish Hall, and dined on ham and potato salad, and now with their cigars lighted they were being sung to. The women of the Auxiliary in hats and aprons who had served the dinner, sank exhausted onto chairs around the kitchen table for cigarettes

and coffee, and Sherry appeared at the service window and beckoned to me.

"We will leave as soon as we can," he said. "My old friend, Jane Douglas, is playing at the National and I have tickets. Wash the catsup off your forehead and be ready. We may miss the first act, but I want to say hello to Jane."

We were late getting to the theatre, but I had almost two acts to watch Jane, who belonged to a phase of Sherry's life which I had not shared. Those were the years when he was a student at Columbia, studying to be a dramatic critic and doing odd jobs around the theatre for pocket money. When the curtain fell, we went backstage and I was glad that Sherry knew his way around; it was really my first visit to a star's dressing-room, although I thought I knew what it would be like, I had seen them in the movies many times. To my disappointment I found that Dressing Room A at the National Theatre bears not the faintest resemblance to Dressing Room A when it is a movie or a stage set. A mirror along one wall glaringly lighted, a cluttered shelf below it, clothes on hangers along the opposite wall, cigarettes ground out on the floor, and a shabby couch, made the little room raw and utilitarian. There were no soft rugs and comfortable chairs; there was just one kitchen chair in a corner, and it was occupied. There was no screen for the star to dress behind while she revealed her head and bare shoulders over the top and flirted with the man in evening dress who loved her and intended to murder her, or something else as romantic.

"Sherry, darling!" Jane cried, and kissed him, leaving him spread with lipstick like tomato catsup. Her stage make-up was startling at close range; her nostrils were painted an alarming red, and the flame spread from them, and matched her blazing hair. I slid quietly around her to a seat on the couch, and took a look at the occupant of the kitchen chair.

She was a small, pretty woman in a Red Cross overseas uniform. She looked as if she might have been a boarding-school friend, and I hoped that she was, and that she felt as out of it as I did. Jane turned to me.

"Of course Sherry still writes lyrics—you probably have a musical comedy home life; he was always training the Cobb girls and me to be a chorus. You must have great fun!"

"I hate to make you feel sorry for him, but I am not the least bit musical," I said. "Every tune written since the Bunny Hug sounds to me like 'Tea for Two.'"

"My dear," she shrieked, "I can't decide whether you have said the right thing or the wrong thing, but 'Tea for Two' is Louise's song! She introduced it!" I realized then that the Red Cross uniform was not a boarding-school friend, and that she was perfectly at home in Dressing Room A. I was alone.

"And I was in love with Louise for years," said Sherry turning to her. "You remember me, don't you? I was the one in the front row of the top gallery on the left-hand side every night." Louise smiled graciously and kissed her hand to him. "You'll both come up to the rectory with us, won't you?" Sherry continued. "I am sure there is some food."

I hoped there was, but I was not as sure as Sherry. As we rode home I tried to remember what the inside of my icebox looked like the last time I saw it. When I have a good cook, I make it a point not to pry into her affairs, such as iceboxes. I supposed that I would have to scramble the breakfast eggs; I had been told that acting gave one a tremendous appetite.

When we arrived at R Street, Jane stepped out on the sidewalk and put her head on one side, and looked admiringly at the rectory.

"Darling," she said to Sherry, "what sort of a racket is this you run? It looks like a good one. Can't I get in on it?" She

swept into the house and Louise followed quietly; she was too well trained in the theatre to steal Jane's act.

I went back to the pantry to set up a tray, but not before I had heard Jane say, "You will play for us, won't you, Sherry? He used to write the most divine lyrics," she said to Louise, "professionally, my dear."

"And anonymously," said Sherry, laughing. "Ghost writing for vaudeville teams, of blessed memory. My 'Tea for Two' had still to be written when Columbia could keep me no longer, and I graduated."

There was food in the icebox. Jane would think I was a good housekeeper, anyway, even if I could not sing. And even if my theatrical experience had been confined to my appearance with the Ben Greet Players in the gardens of the Richmond College when I was three years old, and later being Hiawatha in the back yard, or The Brook in Grandmother's parlors. As I sliced the roast of beef left from Sunday, I began to recite dramatically to myself:

"I come from haunts of coot and hern, I make a sudden sally, I sparkle out among the fern And bicker down a valley."

Whatever Alfred, Lord Tennyson meant by "coot and hern," it was not what I meant. To me it was under the piano from which I, The Brook, emerged horizontally.

This was getting me nowhere; I must stop thinking of my theatrical past and think of something knowing and sophisticated to say about the modern theatre. I heard what I thought was probably "Tea for Two" in the living-room, and Sherry was playing and Louise was singing. I carried in the tray, still without a bright theatrical quip.

I did not have to talk. Jane was a good talker. She laughed and cried, and she made me laugh and cry. She shed her theatre rôle slowly, and I thought of all the Pulpiteers I knew who shed their rôle slowly after a performance.

When the evening was over, Sherry took our guests to their hotel, and I washed the glasses, and poured the lipsticked cigarette butts out of the ash trays into the fire. Sherry came home in a philosophical mood.

"Funny what happens to ambitions," he said. "They kind of creep up on you when you are thinking of something else, when you have outgrown them, and when you don't care any more. At least that is what always happens to mine. I have never wanted anything in the church as much as I once wanted to play an accompaniment for Louise."

"You should write songs again," I said, pursuing my own thoughts. "You haven't written any poetry for years, do you realize that? Not even birthday poems."

"I guess I am too busy trying to sing the Lord's Song, and that's something so different. And as for poems—everything I see or feel now I find myself trying to turn into a sermon illustration."

"You used to say that writing poems was a help to sermon making. I still sort of wish you would write me a poem," I said wistfully as I turned out the last light and started up the stairs.

It was Christmas 1944, our third Christmas in the rectory of the Church of the Epiphany, and the world had changed from comedy to tragedy. We had no interest in ambassadors or bishops or actresses. The red curtains were drawn in the living-room, and there was a sprig of holly behind each picture; flames of the logs burning in the fireplace danced again in the bright ornaments on the Christmas tree. Sherry had been at church all day, and he would be there all night, and the girls were out carolling, and I was performing the last rites of a lonely, heavy-hearted Santa Claus; it was all

in the tradition of a rectory Christmas, but it had lost its gaiety.

The telephone rang, and I flew to answer it. Charlie's voice from Camp Blanding in Florida sounded homesick—"Hello, Mother! Merry Christmas! Don't worry about me tomorrow. I'll be spending Christmas in Jacksonville with the L'Engles and it will be kind of like home. . . . I'll be seeing you soon. . . . Our training has been cut. . . . They think they will need us to stop Von Runstedt. . . . The only trouble is they have cut our final leave, too, from ten days to five. . . ."

I went back to the living-room and turned on the radio. This was not a Christmas for "Silent Night"! Instead, there was more bitter news of fighting through snow and ice in the Ardennes Forest, and the fighting was not going our way. Now Charlie would soon be thrown to the War God. I could take no pride in having him march off to what seemed to me an inglorious crime, and the result of many years of human blundering. The cards would be stacked against him; why should my child come back? And if he did not come back? There would be tragedy in losing a son, but there was a still greater tragedy which was that the son had lost his life, and nineteen years is not enough for an eager boy to have in this beautiful, hideous, fantastic, fascinating world. My heart was full of a sort of cosmic grief, for my child, and through him for all boys. What glory was there in the death to which they had gone? General Eisenhower had described the men who are left on the battle ground as like little boys who had gone to bed, but whose mothers had not tucked them in.

These were the dismal thoughts which spun in my brain, because women will always hate war more than men hate it. A burning log crashed down between the andirons, sending a shaft of sparks up the chimney, and I remembered the first

time I heard those awful words: "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." Grandfather had read them many years before at the morning prayers which he always held in his library. I had listened to Grandfather with irritation and disbelief. It could not be true! It would not be true! Just see what a beautiful world it was: the sun was shining on the snow, and I had a new red coat. Grandfather was wrong. Now I could even remember the tones of his voice, "—as the sparks fly upwards."

I had forgotten the carollers until I heard their voices outside the front door. "Joy to the world, the Lord is come—"

they were singing.

"Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy," the angel had said. "Tidings of great joy!" Just as Christmas carols had come to life for me on that Christmas in Fredericksburg long ago, so now they brought another message when I was in dire need of it. Joy suddenly took on a meaning which had nothing to do with carefree merriment. "What is the chief end of man?" asks the Westminster catechism, and it answers in one of the greatest lines ever written, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Nineteen years multiplied a million times and spilled on the battlefield were not the end in God, and these were the glad tidings of great joy.

I opened the door for the carollers; they came in with shining faces, and they were singing about the baby who

was born in Bethlehem.

Once in a long while, when the staff needs help, I take my place in the outer office at the parish house to answer inquiries and give directions, not because I have the information, but it interests me to hear the questions and problems which people bring in to a downtown church. If there should ever have been any doubt in my mind as to whether churches should stay downtown, or all move to the suburbs or sections where people have their homes, that doubt is dispelled by a day in the office of the church on G Street. Then I realize that while some churches witness through architecture and some by tradition, the witness of Epiphany is people.

When the attractive young man with the discharge button knocked on the open door, I gave him my best professional

manner left over from the Montague days.

"What can I do for you?"

"Lady, I'm lost! May I sit down here for just a minute?" He dropped on the bench and pulled a handkerchief out of his pocket and wiped his face. "Before you tell me where to go, will you please tell me what goes on in this place anyway? And lady, why don't you put up a few signs and arrows? I came in to see the Reverend Mr. Williams. He told me on Sunday that I could come, and he said 'just come upstairs,' and I have found everything but the Reverend Mr. Williams.

"I went upstairs as high as I could go, because Mr. Williams sort of emphasized the up, and there was a room set up with photographer's lights and screens, so I went down a flight, and there was a door which said Woman's Battalion. Now I know that Mr. Williams was a chaplain, but it was no Woman's Battalion he was with! Anyway the sign said 'Information,' so I asked inside and was told to go down through the parish hall and up again. I opened another door looking for the parish hall, but it wasn't; it was a gallery, and a big poster said Episcopal Canteen and fell over on me—by the way, I am not interrupting you, am I? When I got downstairs, it was evidently a restaurant; there were tables and chairs and the smell of coffee, and hundreds of women flying around. Say, is this one of those amphibious churches, half restaurant and half church?

"When I could catch a woman to ask, she said, 'I think you will find Mr. Williams upstairs.' When I found some more steps, I went all the way up again and into a gymnasium where some little colored children and some little white children were having a rip-roaring time, but Mr. Williams was not there.

"I came down again and I started opening doors. I know I should have knocked, but it had become a challenge to my powers of finding the body. I opened a door just a crack and there was a room full of sand tables and sewing machines and women sewing, but Mr. Williams wasn't there. I opened the next door, and the room was full of pianos and an artistic-looking guy and somebody singing, but it wasn't Mr. Williams. The next door was open, and it was a pleasant-looking little room, just the place for Mr. Williams, but two colored men were setting up palms in the corners, but they weren't Mr. Williams."

He stopped for a minute and looked at the inner door which was closed. There were unmistakable sounds of sobbing from within. "He isn't in there, is he?"

"No, that's the rector's office. Come on, I'll lead you to Mr. Williams."

We went upstairs by another flight, down a corridor, and knocked on a door. Mr. Williams greeted him, and invited him into an office with shabby, comfortable furniture, a wood fire burning on the hearth and an aspidistra on the window sill. Before I left them, the articulate young man had a few comments to make: "Say! you shouldn't be stuck up here without protection! If you got closeted with some emotional, unbalanced fanatic, anything might happen and you wouldn't be found for a month. Get yourself a buzzer and a glass panel. And then put up some This Way signs. Boy! what a place!"

The door closed and I went back to the office in time to

take my seat behind a big desk and look the other way when Sherry ushered out a young woman with her handkerchief to her eyes.

No parish house ever reflected a parish better than does the parish house of the Church of the Epiphany. Since the days when it was part of the Church of England the Episcopal Church in Virginia and Maryland has divided a city into parishes, just as it divides a state into dioceses, and within the parish boundaries of the Church of the Epiphany there lives not a single communicant. Instead, there are offices, shops, restaurants, movie houses, fish wharves, a red light district, and the Government departments of Commerce, the Interior, and the Post Office.

The parish house had been built in 1912 when there had been homes around the church. It contains many Sunday School rooms, rooms for women's meetings, a large hall with a stage which had once been used for pageants and theatricals, and a gymnasium intended to lure young men from pool parlors and to give them basketball and Indian clubs with the blessing of the church.

In 1942, the members of the church lived too far away to bring their children in to Sunday School at the traditional hour of nine-thirty and then come back themselves to the eleven o'clock church service, and the Sunday School had become very small. The young men were not thinking of parish house basketball, and large areas of the parish house might have been abandoned as anachronistic, or it could be used by the present neighborhood in entirely new ways.

Washington's chief need during the war was for space, and we found the Woman's Battalion already ensconced in the two rooms originally intended for visiting clergymen. The Woman's Battalion, sometimes called the Beauty Battalion, is an activity of the United Service Organization. It arranges for young women to be taken several times a week to the

dances which are given at the military camps near Washington. Each young woman comes to the office and applies for membership. She gives her references, and then she goes to the upper room and has her picture taken. This picture is put on an identification badge like the ones which workers in government departments wear; without the badge, a girl cannot attend a dance; if she does not behave, she forfeits her badge. On the nights of the dances, the girls and their chaperons meet at the church, and they are checked into the big buses which come for them. Later, at twelve o'clock, they are brought back by the same buses and chaperons. The Woman's Battalion, of course, pays nothing for its office space; it is part of the parish of the Church of the Epiphany.

A certain amount of space was still assigned to the use of the Sunday School, but the children had almost reached the vanishing point. When Sherry had first looked over the page in the Washington newspapers which advertised church services, he found every heading set up in Old English type, and his first reform was to take his own church services out of Old English and put them into block print. Now he looked over his congregation, and he knew he must do something drastic to bring it out of the Old English era. He, who had been Vice-President in Charge of Promotion and Propaganda for the National Council, would have to make a demonstration. He changed the hour of Sunday School from nine-thirty to eleven o'clock, and he had the children come into church and occupy the front pews until the sermon hymn, during which they go out to their classes. He put them into the front seats for several reasons, first, so that they could see what happened in the chancel and learn to feel at home in church, and then to show the congregation that there was a younger generation. The next thing he did was to form a Junior choir, which sings the first

part of the service with the big choir and then goes out to Sunday School. The Junior choir was not very loud or confident at first, but they were young and pretty, and they helped to lower the average age.

An expensive gymnasium must be used, and before we came, our neighbors, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, had asked for the privilege of using it several nights a week, and they had been given it. When young people from the Office of the Congress of Industrial Organizations asked to use it, as part of the community, they were given the use of it. Then a little progressive school bent on serious demonstration of racial accord moved into the only building in town available to it, which happened to be on G Place, and there was no place for the children to play. They, too, were given the use of the gymnasium, and it was this group which the young man found when he was taking his unconducted tour.

The women who were sewing in the Sunday School room might have been found in any parish house; they were mending garments to be given away, or sewing for the Red Cross, or mending the church linen and vestments. The busy women setting tables might also have been found in any suburban parish house. All through Lent they serve daily luncheons to make money for their budget, because the Woman's Auxiliary has many projects both in heathen lands and at home. Noontime Lenten services draw crowds of from six hundred to sixteen hundred people, depending on the popularity of the visiting Pulpiteer, and enough of them stop for lunch to make it a good business venture.

The sign which had fallen on the young man's head was put out on the sidewalk on Saturday afternoons, and it was the signal to the soldiers and sailors walking the pavement in search of amusement to come in to the Episcopal Canteen. This canteen opened at two o'clock and was run by the Diocese here because it was a strategic location. It follows

the usual pattern, with music and hostesses provided for jitterbugging in the big hall, tables for games, and a quiet room for reading and writing home to mother, and of course there was a kitchen crew who served hamburgers and cokes. Then the Episcopal Canteen diverged from the accepted form of canteens because at eleven o'clock it closed with prayers in the church, which were more or less attended by the service men and women.

When the young man had opened the door on the "artistic-looking guy," he had found the studio of Adolph Torovsky, who, young as he is, has been organist and choir master at the Church of the Epiphany for twenty-five years. His father was bandmaster at Annapolis for years, and it is something of this military precision which Mr. Torovsky contributes to his church music. Under Mr. Torovsky's supervision, every day at twelve o'clock, and on Sundays at eight and eleven in the morning, and at eight at night, the chimes ring out for a few minutes to the world of G Street.

In the last room to which our pilgrim came, he found colored men putting up palms. Even on a busy day in Lent there was time for a wedding, and this room was being prepared for the reception. After a while a caterer would deliver the wedding cake and punch, which had been ordered through the church office. The Church of the Epiphany works on the theory that a wedding should be an event, as impressive and pleasant as it can be made, and if a couple cannot manage it themselves, the church will arrange it for them, even putting flowers on the altar, and a white "runner" up the aisle for the bride's new shoes to tread on, and providing the room where they can greet their friends afterwards.

There is a canon of the Episcopal Church which reads, "the couple shall go to a clergyman for instruction," and here the canon is taken seriously. Besides the conference

with the clergyman, which is no light matter, they must go to a doctor for instruction in planned parenthood and for the Wassermann test. There is no fee taken by the officiating clergyman because Sherry prefers that his brides and grooms feel an obligation to the church which they cannot pay by slipping an envelope to the minister. For the first few years of his ministry, Sherry accepted wedding fees, which by a time-honored custom are turned over to the minister's wife and no questions asked. They are in the category with director's fees and the wife does whatever frivolous thing she pleases with them. Strange as it may seem, I, who am always broke, was never happy about taking them. I felt that marriage was a service of the church and should be given without a fee as are the services of baptism and burial, and besides, I thought they were slipped to Sherry like a tip, and that he lost caste by taking them. We abandoned this erratic source of income, and it was a wise decision. More than the fee has been paid to the church in the gratitude and loyalty of the young people who have been married there, many of whom would otherwise have made no contact with the church.

During one year there were ninety-eight weddings in the Church of the Epiphany, and so far as I know only one prospect was turned back by the pre-marital requirements. She telephoned the rectory, and since Sherry was not in, she gave me the message:

"I went down to church to talk to Reverend Sheerin about getting married," she said, and I knew then that she had not gone very far with the subject because there is only one person who is allowed to call Sherry "Reverend Sheerin," and that is my mother's maid, Ruth. "Will you please tell him that Jim, that's my fiancé, and I have talked it over, and we think that what with all he said we had to do, it doesn't hardly seem worth while."

The latest addition to the list of organizations which meet in the parish house, is a group of Alcoholics Anonymous. On Tuesday and Friday evenings more than three hundred men and women gather there. The office staff told me that I should make a point of seeing them because they were such fine-looking people. The church lays great emphasis on Godgiven strength "to lead a new life" and to "turn from our wickedness and live," it is good to have a connection with those who have taken the lines seriously.

Partly by chance and partly through conscious choice, Sherry's ministry had taken a clear-cut direction. The theme of his preaching had been changing from the liberal, almost humanistic gospel which had prevailed when he left the Virginia Seminary. I am not sure that I realized the complete change in his theology until I was surprised to hear him in the pulpit quoting an old hymn which I had long ago relegated to my grandmother and the Reconstruction Era. "In my hand no price I bring," and he sounded terribly in earnest, "simply to Thy cross I cling!" Man by himself had not been able to help himself after all; he was in a morass of sin and wickedness. There had never been a truce between good and evil, and it had become quite clear that there was no inevitable spiritual evolution toward God. Man could only be redeemed by the grace of God.

Since confused people long for good strong dogma, this sort of preaching brought them back on week-days.

Sherry's first curate, Ed Mullen, in Waco, had taught him a Protestant version of the Roman confessional. Sometimes he put on vestments and went into church; usually the confession could be made less formally, but it is a necessary step in conversion.

The first thing Sherry told the men and women who came to him for pastoral counselling, was that the church had no plan for the unconverted. Sometimes they must go all the way to hell before they can come back. It is hard to let a psychopathic drunkard, who is normally a cultured person, really sleep in the gutter, and when Sherry was weak about it, and gave such a person the money for a room, Alcoholics Anonymous showed him that he had slowed up a conversion. And that is what often has to happen in a spiritual pilgrimage. It was no new psychological discovery; it was probably what the psalmist meant when he said, "If I climb up into heaven thou art there; if I go down to hell thou art there also."

That Sherry had a talent for pastoral counselling was evident by the expression of one young woman who said: "He can put his finger on the sorest spot on your soul, and it doesn't hurt any more!" Each problem usually required several visits, and he made undecipherable notes in a combination of Greek and English on the background story. When the case was closed, the notes were destroyed.

The only thing which has not occurred in the Church of the Epiphany is childbirth; every other crisis has been met some way. Since Sherry was the same person who joined the Shrine in Waco because he wanted to be near the people, it was entirely fitting that his church should be in the middle of Washington. It was proper that, with Mr. Torovsky's permission, he should be able to go to the organ at noon and send the Lord's song ringing from the bell tower to clash with the city traffic, and yet somehow keep its notes transcendant.

Almost twenty years had passed since the sunny Sunday when we had sat with Uncle Tom on his terrace above the James River and discussed the ministry and the rôle of a minister's wife. Now Uncle Tom was gone, but through the years I had often thought of our conversation. I had been governed by expediency, there had never been any plan or

order in my life; in fact I was not sure I had worked out a philosophy for this profession which sweeps the wife into it whether she likes it or not, except that it is nice to work even in a minor way with your husband.

The woman's work of the church is called by various names, and it has various functions, but the most generally known, and the most inclusive, is the Woman's Auxiliary. Through the years I had developed a great respect for the Woman's Auxiliary, which seemed to me to reach a high point in Chattanooga. I cannot put my finger on the thing that gives a vital spirit to everything connected with the church in Chattanooga, but it is there. In most communities, the organizations which hold out social prestige as a bait for workers, drain off the woman power from church work, but that was not true in Chattanooga. There young women and older women gave the church the benefit of their training elsewhere, and the secular organizations were better for having church women in their membership. The Woman's Auxiliary in Chattanooga was stimulating and congenial, and I hated to leave it.

During the National Council days, I had four years' holiday from any responsibility in church work, and I came to Washington rather pleased with the prospect of getting back to it. Since Washington is one of the places where women who might be giving their talents to the church, by-pass it for other activities, anyone who shows a little initiative is conspicuous. In my first enthusiasm for returning to a parish, I looked like a better worker than I am, and before I knew it, I was sent as a delegate to the triennial meeting of the Woman's Auxiliary, which is a parallel meeting to the General Convention.

Of course I was not allowed to stop there: the trip had to be paid for. When I came home I was drawn into a realm which I had carefully avoided, the realm of public speaking. After I got over my first fright, I discovered that it is easier to be a speaker and get the corsage, and let the other people do the work, but my fright lasted a long time. I found myself standing in front of meetings of church women, having been introduced as "our speaker today-," and to me the room seemed full of female dragons. To anybody else they were just a few nice hard-working women who were glad of a chance to sit down. Women patiently allow everyone to harangue them from returned missionaries and bishops to me, and I think it is because they like to sit quietly and think their own thoughts, which they are not allowed to do at home. Anyway there I was, and nobody had ever told me how to be a speaker. It was a predicament for me and for the people in front of me, and it seemed unfair that they had to pay a penalty for my trip to the General Convention. They were not always polite, and sometimes they went to sleep and that would tempt me to say the most outrageous thing I could think of; if I could have stood on my head to finish the speech I would have done it to wake them up, but I cannot stand on my head.

My third public appearance should have been my last. A large group of attractive young women asked me to speak to their night meeting about Christian Social Relations, a subject as wide and varied as its name implies. I had brought my outline, written on neat little white cards.

The chairman looked my way, and tossed the words—"Our speaker—" I fumbled; and the cards scattered in every direction, and my neat little thoughts with them. I clutched wildly: Christian Social Relations was everything, and then I remembered a heading in the book, "Rural Work."

"I don't suppose there are any really isolated rural communities these days." (Hadn't I heard someone say something like that?) A pregnant young woman on the front row gave what can only be described as a horse laugh, and she swung around in her chair until her back was to me. I wanted to argue, but I could not remember any precedent for "our speaker today" opening a debate with the front row. This was not supposed to be a Town Meeting. I stopped for a moment and glared at her back and said fiercely to her, "Sears Roebuck and the radio have penetrated every cabin." I asked God to make it true even if it did not make sense, and I hurried on to what I thought was a safe subject.

"We will now consider race relations in the Diocese of Washington. After the war, we will be obliged to readjust our attitude to the Japanese. It will be hard. They aren't attractive, and we are being made to feel that they are downright revolting-" I heard a chair turn over on the porch, and a face appeared at the open window. It was a Japanese face, and it grinned at me, and then like Alice's Cheshire cat, it faded out into the night. The audience looked at the face, and then looked at each other and smiled. I do not know how I got to the end of that assignment, but somehow it was over, and I stepped off of the dais and collapsed into my chair, wiping good, honest sweat off my face. The girl next to me whispered, "That Japanese lives with the rector. He is being befriended,—or he was," she added with a feeble effort to laugh it off, but I felt that I had set international relations back twenty years. When the motion to adjourn was too enthusiastically voted, I hurried out and found that Sherry had come for me and was sitting outside the door looking amused.

"Quick, let's go!" I said. When we were safely in the car, and I had relaxed in the seat beside him, I said, "How much did you hear?"

"Plentyl You were wonderfull You were terrible, of course, and I am so glad. If you were too good at my game, I would be jealous as hell of you!"

Somehow I was more than comforted, I was tremendously

pleased. For the space of a brief moment my rôle as the parson's wife seemed clearer.

If you turn to the back of the Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church, you will find concern expressed for the kind of woman the parson marries. The concern appears in the services of ordination and consecration, and again in the Thirty-nine Articles. Paul started it when he wrote to Timothy in the year 64 A.D., and listed the requirements for Bishops and Deacons: "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things."

Whatever the world needs, the preacher will be preaching. Sherry's father preached the social gospel and Sherry preached the wickedness of the world and the need for redemption. What the next generation will preach, will be determined by the sins of their generation. Sherry was a diehard liberal. That school of theology had fought a hard battle for the critical, historical approach to the Bible. Then, the battle won, some of them let themselves become soft about sin and man. Theology, like all other sciences, cannot stand still. When the tragedies of war began to pile up for all of us, the hard theology of crisis offered a needed strength. He turned to reading theology again; as usual I could only follow him the easy way, which was a long way off. The problems of the parson's wife are not theological.

I was willing to accept Sherry's judgment on dogma and doctrine; there were other fields to disagree on. I thought, for instance, that he should make all the social calls for the family, since a parson was expected to call anyway. The calls I did not make still bother me a little. In Washington, calling cards are kept on the hall table and dusted regularly and are arranged with the impressive names on top. At intervals I look over mine and throw away the cards of

callers who have moved away, or died, or transferred to St. John's Church instead of waiting for me. I wrote a letter bewailing the whole time-consuming custom to my friend and highly valued correspondent, Winifred McAllester, in Chattanooga, and Winifred wrote back:

"The form and ceremony which you describe is to me, in this virile, struggling, democratic young town, incredible. You speak of the number of calls. I am afraid I like to pay calls better than to receive them. One is always interrupted, the house strewn with peanut shells, and the children having a knock-down, drag-out fight. But of course I love to have friends drop in, and we have only the assistant minister and the Fort Oglethorpe wives to pay the other kind here. When I call I feel dressed up and triumphant over catching the other person at a disadvantage. It's like a gangster's hold-up." As usual Winifred had given me a vigorous slant on the thing. Some day when I have time on my hands, I will play her diabolical little game. But when a sunny day comes, the kind of day Mary Temple recommended for calling, it is much less trouble to get out a bicycle, pump up the tires, and pedal along the Potomac River. There Washington seems less superficial because of the sphinx which broods over it: the Monument with its strange, weeping eyes. In trying to fathom the silent sorrow, I forget about calls.

When it comes to the other kind of call, when the rector is asked if he will go to another parish, then I had advice to give, and my advice was always the same because I do not like to move. The system of changing in the Episcopal Church is like a great game of Puss-in-the-Corner. Calls which come can be openly discussed, and I suppose children should feel that they are important enough to have a part in family decisions. And yet when children know there is a

possible move, it must shake their security to feel that they can be pulled up by the roots.

Every clergyman must have desired a call at some time which he did not get. It is not cricket to suggest to a friend that you would like a call. Even your best friend is not above betraying you, and telling his best friend that you are restless. Most clergymen will admit to having a dream parish, the parish which has glamour and charm for him and is his private criterion of success. When we were young and had dreams, they were about a church which nestles in the elbow of Manhattan, where Broadway bends. Its dainty spires rise like frosting on a wedding cake, and its windows are like jewels. When the hyacinths and tulips are spilled across its little churchyard like Easter eggs, the crowds hurrying by to Wanamaker's, or to the bookstalls on Fourth Avenue, know that it is spring. Fortunately, it is not dream churches which come true. We did not dream of Waco or Chattanooga, and at first I thought they were major tragedies, but they proved to be the best things which happened to the family. Is it presumptuous to say that is where God comes in?

A few minor worries were left entirely to me. I worried because we were not able either financially or physically to have all the people for dinner who invited the rector and his wife to dine. I was sure parishioners understood, but it seemed ungrateful. A friend of mine married a clergyman and moved to a hospitable suburb, and she kept a list of dinner obligations with a sincere intention of repaying them. When the list reached fifty, she tore it up. It was a hopeless, pleasant debt.

Doctors who give prompt attention and send no bills were another problem to me. I could not make a token payment of marmalade or fruit cake because I could not make marmalade or fruit cake, and all the unmarked wedding silver was used up years ago. Some people have a talent for selecting just the right present, and in other people this ability is lacking as an ear for music might be lacking. I became bewildered when I had to make a selection from a mass of irrelevant objets d'art, and I had an unbroken record for fantastic gifts culminating in the warming pan. Once I had an entirely charming beau, whom I did not marry because I had a presentiment of Sherry. When he married, I sent him a warming pan for a wedding present, and his wife probably underestimated my guilelessness. I am an uncomfortable grateful patient, and I prefer bills. Sherry did not agree with me.

We also disagreed on the heart throb of the nation, which was my name for it and not his; he liked to listen to it, and I did not. I liked a train ride because it meant hours of uninterrupted reading. He liked a train ride because it gave him a chance to find out what George Spelvin was thinking, and then he could preach about it. He talked to everybody, which made a trip with him a hotbed of intimate friends. Sometime ago he rode from Washington to New York with Joe Dawson, who sells hats in Syracuse, and now I, too, know all about Joe Dawson, including his breakfast food. Since the description which Sherry gave me of Joe Dawson is much more entertaining than I have ever found Joe, it was better for Sherry to travel alone.

I was always puzzled by Sherry's intelligence on churches, and his lack of intelligence on rectories. I could order all the old furniture out, and new furniture in, and he would never know it, but at a cursory glance into a strange church, he knew which side of the altar the Prayer Book was on, and what signs and symbols had been made important. Rectories are something between vestries and me, and I soon found out that they were not mine.

"You will deliver that this afternoon?" I found myself saying.

"Yes, ma'am. Is that a private home?"

"No. The door will be unlocked." That is the only answer. Rectories are not private homes. By the grace of God, and through no effort of our own, we have a pleasant roof over our heads. With it goes a special responsibility.

It was not easy at first to be ready for the flow of people through a rectory. When the Reverend Mr. Hall, from the Northern Neck, arrived at the Fredericksburg Rectory, he had to ring the door bell because in those days I liked to have a warning. I put the baby down and opened the door for him. He dropped his bag in the hall and asked me when supper would be ready. By that time the baby was crying. Emma was out and Sherry was out, and I had made no preparation for supper. I was ungracious. "You will have a better supper down town," I said. "I am sure it will be some time before the baby will stop crying."

"It never hurt a baby to cry," he said, and he went off murmuring something about scrambled eggs.

Now I take the latch off the front door and wait eagerly to see who comes in. We have a special chair that we like to put our guests in because it amuses us to hear the different opinions which issue from its depths. In the same evening, fortunately in different shifts, we have heard from it of the beauties and blessings of industrial democracy, and an hour or so later we have been threatened with this: "And where would the church be in a communist state? The church is dependent on capitalism, and you know it. You had better stick to the buttered side of your bread!" There is always someone in the guest room, and there is no such thing as an unexpected guest: the uninvited is the unknown. I should hate to live in a private home.

Sometimes the parson's wife has to be the slave in the chariot, the one who is there to say, "Remember thou art but mortal!" The church at its worst is a performance by the

rector; then he becomes a matinée idol, and his picture might even be found enshrined with candles beside it and fresh flowers before it, giving an emotional thrill to some otherwise unsatisfied woman. A popular preacher keeps his soul by the grace of God and through the efforts of an irreverent wife. A popular preacher with sex appeal proves more than anything else the greatness of the church. If the church has survived the popular preacher with sex appeal, the church can survive anything. Some women have no desire to see God; their vision is limited to the priest at the altar; he is glamour and romance to her, and that is almost enough. Fortunately for the effectiveness of the ministry, which must be for all sorts of men and women, the clergyman is protected by his profession as a doctor is. Without this protection, the woman who gave me the poinsettia on Easter Sunday in Richmond could not have been dealt with. and neither could the mothers in Chattanooga who had the illegitimate child on their hands to dispose of.

I found out in the first year of our marriage that the respect and homage which is accorded a clergyman does not spill over onto his wife. The disillusioning experience occurred at a country church picnic. Sherry attended many of these before he could persuade me to go. Finally he enticed me by his description of the food, and what I got was my just desert. He said that no food was served anywhere more delicious and bountiful than at an "all day preaching" in the country, and he was not above bragging about how many chicken legs he was always obliged to eat "to be polite and show his appreciation." I went with him to a service at which he was to be the main speaker, and it was quite an event since it was only held when June had a fifth Sunday. At the end of the morning service we were invited to the luncheon spread under the trees in the churchyard. Sherry's

plate was piled high with all that he had described to me, and then I was served a fried chicken foot. It was a great day in both our lives, and one which I could forget more easily than he; the chicken foot has been symbolical ever since.

A parson's wife can find a full-time job in a variety of fields. She may do ecclesiastical embroidery, or she may spend her time and energy taking derelicts to her bosom, or she may run the Woman's Auxiliary. If you ever hear a clergyman say, "I have told my wife that she must never take the leadership in any organization in the church," you can be sure that the wife dictated the order. If the wife wants to be a leader in the women's work of the church, wild horses, much less her husband's orders, will not stop her. She is going to choose work which her temperament and her conscience dictate. I have learned from experience to be wary of boards, either community or church, because I know from experience that boards spawn, and soon there is a litter of little committees to be attended to, and then there is no time left to be pleasantly frittered away in rectory life.

In Fredericksburg on Sunday mornings I was consistently late for the eleven-o'clock service. That is the privilege of the parson's wife when she has babies to feed and bathe, and that is the advantage of living next door to the church. Later I was alone in the rector's pew, and in my place half an hour before the service commenced. Charlie and Maria were in college, and Betsy had taken her place in the Junior choir. In a little while when the processional hymn started, Betsy would walk in behind the cross looking so small and clean in her blue choir robe and big white collar, and nobody but I would know of the aversion she still had to soap and water.

I opened the prayer book or the hymnal to keep my mind off the hats that were beginning to cluster around me. St. Paul was unimaginative when he ordered women to wear hats in church, but I suppose saints are not always prophets, and St. Paul could not have had any clue to what future generations of women would put on their heads. Aunt Agatha had told me years ago not to be careless about my hats, and I had a friend in the congregation who sat behind me and insisted on a certain standard. Instead of resenting her interest I liked to have her do it: it made me think of aunts. She was a grande dame who awed me and I took it seriously when she telephoned me after church and said:

"Maria, my dear, don't be angry with me, but I can't let you slip. Your hat today was terrible. Don't wear it again, will you? I am sure Sherry will agree with me."

I asked the Lord not to let me think about my hat, either. I used to make boats and birds of the church bulletin to keep the children quiet, later I had plenty of time to study the less frequently used sections in the back of the prayer book, such as services for the making of Deacons, Priests and Bishops, and the Articles of Religion. I know well the directions which are given a parson for choosing a wife. St. Paul described to Timothy the proper young woman for a parson's wife, and the young deacon being ordained is advised in the Epistle to choose accordingly. The Church Fathers in the time of Queen Elizabeth, in defiance of Rome, included among the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion one which reads:

Bishops, Priests and Deacons are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage: therefore it is lawful for them, as for all Christian men, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve better to Godliness.

Whether it serves better to Godliness, is a subject for argument. The devil can reach a priest rather easily through his family. He finds it harder to give his time and thought to the will of God while his less converted family clamors its will into his ear. On the other hand, he is nearer to being a whole or wholesome man for having that family, the family relationship keeps a man humble, while it gives him a clinic. He can never be so theoretical as the celibate, and he desires more urgently that the world should be a better place than the unmarried priest can desire it.

I know a bishop who shakes his head sadly over the wives of the clergymen. He says they are a clergyman's wild oat. Whatever the wife may be between the grave and sober young woman of St. Paul's Epistle to Timothy, and the Wild Oat, she would be loath to exchange this profession which she can share for any other.

As I waited for the service to begin, I remembered the days when I thought the 137th Psalm would be my theme song. I have not sat down by the waters of Babylon and wept. If it has been hard to sing the Lord's song in a strange land, it is because the temptations of a too pleasant world have pressed in on me. The Brazos River in Texas, the Tennessee River, the Hudson River, and finally the Potomac River have all flowed happily through my exile which has not been an exile.

The notes of the organ brought me out of my dream, and the processional hymn reached a crescendo. I stood on tiptoe so that I would not miss Betsy as she went by. Throughout the service my sin would be my wandering mind. It would be brought back again and again by the impact of the strong language of the prayer book. It would wander paradoxically while I gave private thanks for the Book of Common Prayer. Sherry's father liked to say that the reason for having a Book of Common Prayer is to save the people from the vulgarity

of the minister, and I was thankful for it even while its familiar rhythm lulled my mind.

The lights were dimmed in the chancel when Sherry entered the pulpit. Now my mind would not wander. I was as tense and nervous as I was the first time I heard him preach, and he always seemed assured and calm. I listened eagerly for him to complete his sentences, which in his enthusiasm he did not always do, and I hoped fervently for him to make his point.

He told us that we are all wicked sinners in a world of doubt and confusion and fear. . . . Once we tried to break with Sin and throw out a God of Judgment, but Sin caught up with us, and Judgment was upon our heads. . . . We are in daily warfare against evil. For our doubt we have evidences of the domination of God, for our confusion, the way of Jesus, and for our fear the presence of the Holy Spirit. . . . It is not easy because God is a Jealous God. (Here I remembered the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and of Doré and Foster's Bible Stories, and the second commandment which I longed to reject as a child, haunted me insistently.) There comes a time when the Lord's song is the only song which gives us courage in a strange land.

When the chancel lights flared up again, I wondered as I had wondered so many hundreds of times before, why I had been nervous.

Washington, 1948

Do not look for the Parson in his pulpit. He has now gone gloriously ahead into eternal life, and Heaven seems a fairer place than Earth.